

MOTHER INDIA

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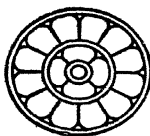
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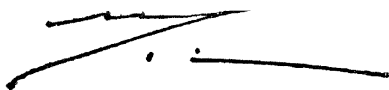


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIII

No. 10-II

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail".

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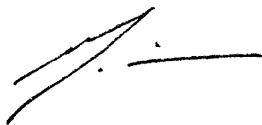
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MESSAGE BY THE MOTHER

The moment approaches
when the Truth will
govern the world.
Will you work to hasten
its coming?

Blessings



The moment approaches when the Truth will govern the world.

Will you work to hasten its coming?

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE only true liberty is that obtained by union with the Divine.
One can unite with the Divine only when the ego is mastered.

Live within, do not be shaken by external circumstances.

To be and to become more and more what the Divine wants us to be, should be
our greatest preoccupation.

26-7-1971

Open to Sri Aurobindo's consciousness and let it transform your life.

26-9-1971

Sri Aurobindo is always present.

Be sincere and faithful.

This is the first condition.

29-9-1971

Only one thing is important, it is to find the Divine.

For each one and for the whole world anything becomes useful, if it helps to find
the Divine.

THE MOTHER'S REPLIES ABOUT SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTH CENTENARY

Q: In what ways can those connected with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother best celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo?

Aspire and be sincere and obstinate in your endeavour.

Q: In what way can people in general best celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo?

Make an effort to ⁷progress in understanding.

14-9-1971

THE MOTHER ON AUROVILLE'S SYMBOL

On 16-8-1971 the Mother made a sketch of the new symbol of Auroville. The tracing of the design was seen by her on the 24-8-1971. She explained the significance thus:

The dot at the centre represents Unity, the Supreme;
the inner circle represents the creation, the conception of the City;
the petals represent the power of expression, the realisation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of October, 1971)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

MAY 9, 1956

Sweet Mother, where does our true spiritual life begin?

The true spiritual life begins when one is in communion with the Divine in the psychic, when one is aware of the divine Presence in the psychic and in constant communion with the psychic. Then the spiritual life begins, not before. The *true* spiritual life.

When one is united with one's psychic being and conscious of the divine Presence, and receives the impulsion for one's action from this divine Presence, and when the will has become a conscious collaboration with the divine Will,—that is the starting-point.

Before that, one may be an aspirant to the spiritual life, but one does not have the true spiritual life.

Sweet Mother, I would like to have the explanation of a sentence. Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere: "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything."

That means that it is the Spirit, the spiritual consciousness and the divine Presence which give all its value to life, that without this spiritual consciousness and divine Presence life has no value.

The same holds true for the individual, whatever may be his material capacities and the material conditions in which he lives, his only worth is that of the divine Presence and the spiritual consciousness in him.

And so from the point of view of the truth of things, a man who has no material possessions and no capacities or remarkable possibilities, but is conscious of his psychic being and united with the Divine in him, is infinitely greater than a ruler upon

earth or a millionaire possessing considerable material power but unconscious of his psychic being.

From the point of view of the truth, it is like that. This is what Sri Aurobindo means: no apparent and outer things have any true value. The only thing which is valuable is the divine consciousness and union with the Spirit.

Mother, according to what you said last time, the question of those who are not consciously open to the new Force yet remains. Then how will they be influenced? Will it be by the spiritual force but not by the supramental?

What, what, what?

What difference do you make between the spiritual force and the supramental?

But you said that those who have done nothing or have not given themselves, how should they hope to be influenced or to profit by this Force? Those who are here but are not consciously open, will they be also influenced?

Influenced, yes.

They will also be helped?

But if they don't care to be helped! You want to help them despite themselves?

If one aspires, wants the help, even if the opening is very small, there is still necessarily some opening. But if one doesn't want to be helped.... Or rather, I could say there are people who are sure they don't need to be helped, they feel that they can help themselves quite well and need no help, that it is they who do the work, they who make progress, they who do everything. So they don't want help, they feel no need of it. Why do you want them to be helped when they don't care about it?

But you said that even the blind will be obliged to realise it.

I said that this will be visible even to those who are ill-willed—is that what you mean? But that's quite different. When you receive a punch on the nose, you will be obliged to recognise something without its having helped you!

When one recognises this Force...

Yes.

One is bound to open...

Yes,

So even he who did not want to be helped so far, will want it.

Recognise this Force?—Oh! when he has received the punch! (*Laughter*) Perhaps. That may happen. Anything may happen.

So, even he who is still unconscious will open under the blow.

And then? What is your conclusion? What do you expect to happen?

That is to say he will see that it is a miracle.

His getting punched? (*Laughter*)

He won't call that a miracle, he will call that a bad deed. He will say: "That's bad luck, it's my unfortunate fate, it is injustice", he will say all sorts of things, such as people are in the habit of saying.

But what I have not yet caught is the point of your question. What are you trying to ask? You mean the whole world whether it wants it or not, whether it aspire or not, whether it recognises this or not, will sooner or later come under the influence of the supramental presence on earth—is that what you mean?

No.

Ah! that's a pity, for that had some meaning. (*Laughter*) And I would have answered: "Yes"—and then it would have been over!

No. Those who are half open...

They will receive half more than those who are not open at all! (*Laughter*)

This manifestation will make them aspire more?

Ah! that I do not know. That must depend on the case. For each one it will be different.

Is it for yourself you are pleading?

Yes.

Oh! Oh! You want to know what will happen to you?

Set your mind at rest, it will be quite all right. I could almost say as for the banner of Joan of Arc: "You have shared in the labour, you will share in the Victory." There then, are you satisfied?

Yes.

MAY 16, 1956

"In sum, it may be safely affirmed that no solution offered can be anything but provisional until a supramental Truth-Consciousness is reached by which the appearances of things are put in their place and their essence revealed and that in them which derives straight from the spiritual essence. In the meanwhile our only safety is to find a guiding law of spiritual experience—or else to liberate a light within that can lead us on the way until that greater direct Truth-Consciousness is reached above us or born within us. For all else in us that is only outward, all that is not a spiritual sense or seeing, the constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, the suggestions or instigations of the Life-force, the positive necessities of physical things are sometimes half-lights, sometimes false lights that can at best only serve for a while or serve a little and for the rest either detain or confuse us."

(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 156)

The necessities of physical things also? I don't understand.

All this, not only physical necessities. All these things are at times some kind of lights, that is to say, knowledge diminished and mixed with ignorance, at times false lights, that is, not knowledge at all: simply ideas, conceptions, ways of seeing, ways of feeling—all these things usually considered as knowledge in the ordinary human consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo speaks even of physical needs, the needs of the body, which are generally considered as quite imperative and having their own truth; he says that even that can be only quite a partial light, that is to say, a semblance of knowledge or even a false thing.

That goes against all modern ideas.

People always have the impression that what they call the need of the body, what the body asks for, is an absolute law; that if it is not obeyed, well, one commits great wrong against one's body which suffers the consequences. And Sri Aurobindo says that these needs in themselves are either very partial lights, that is to say, only a way of seeing things, or even no lights at all, completely false.

If one were to study the problem attentively enough, one would find out to what an extent these so-called needs of the body depend upon the mental attitude. For example, the need to eat. There are people who literally die of hunger if they have not eaten for eight days. There are others who do this deliberately and observe fasting as a principle of yoga, as a necessity in yoga. And for them, at the end of eight days' fasting, the body is as healthy as at first, and sometimes better!

Finally, for all these things, it is a question of proportion, of measure. It is obvious that one can't always live without eating. But it is as obvious that the idea one has about the need to eat is not true. Indeed, it is quite a subject for study: "The importance of the mental attitude in relation to the body."

Sri Aurobindo does not recognise the needs of the body as things true in themselves. He says: it is not true, it is only an idea you have, an impression, it is not something true, something carrying its truth in itself.

Sweet Mother, what is this "imperious law", this "spiritual and supramental law"?

It is the truth of every being.

Every being carries in itself its spiritual law, its supramental law. It is not the same for everyone, it is not one single identical law. For each one it is the truth of his being, that is to say, *the* thing he must realise in the universe and *the* place he must occupy in the world.

That is the truth of his being.

"Inadequate too is the very frequent attempt at a misalliance between the vital and the spiritual, a mystic experience within with an aestheticised intellectual and sensuous Paganism or exalted hedonism outside leaning upon it and satisfying itself in the glow of a spiritual sanction."

(*Ibid.*, p. 155)

What does Sri Aurobindo mean by "an aestheticised Paganism"?

That is how Sri Aurobindo describes the different pantheons of different countries, specially of Greece or India. That is to say, it is an aesthetic or intellectual way of transforming all things into divine creatures, divine beings: all the forces of Nature, all the elements, all spiritual forces, all intellectual forces, all physical forces, all that is changed into a number of godheads and they are given an aesthetic and intellectual reality. It is a symbolic and artistic and literary and poetic way of dealing with all universal forces and realities. It is thus that these Pantheons came into existence, like the Greek or Egyptian pantheon, or even the pantheon of India.

All these gods are representations which Sri Aurobindo calls "aesthetic and intellectual"—a way of conceiving the universe. This does not mean that they do not correspond to a truth (to a reality rather than a truth): there are beings like that; but this is a particular way of approaching the universal world or rather the universal worlds.

Sweet Mother, hasn't morality helped us to increase our consciousness?

That depends on people. There are people who are helped by it, there are people who are not helped *at all*.

Morality is an altogether artificial and arbitrary thing, and in most cases, among the best, it blocks the true spiritual effort by a sort of moral satisfaction that one is on the right path and a true gentleman, that one does one's duty, fulfils all the moral

necessities of life. Thus, one is so self-satisfied that one no longer moves on and makes no progress any more.

It is very difficult for a virtuous man to enter the path of God; this has been often said, but it is indeed true, for he is *most* self-satisfied, he thinks he has realised what he ought to have realised, no longer does he have any aspiration or even that elementary humility which makes you want to progress. You know, he who is called in India a sattwic¹ man is generally very comfortably seated in his virtue and never thinks of coming out of it. So, that puts you a million leagues away from the divine realisation.

What really helps, before one has found the inner light, is to make for oneself a certain number of rules which naturally should not be too rigid and fixed, but yet should be sufficiently precise to prevent one from going completely out of the right path or making irreparable mistakes—mistakes the consequences of which one suffers all one's life.

To do that, it is good to set up a certain number of principles in oneself, which, however, must be in conformity with each one's nature. If you adopt a social, collective rule, you put yourself immediately in bondage to this social rule, and that prevents you almost radically from making any effort for transformation.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo has said that one ought to find a light within, then surrender to the divine Shakti. Now that the Supermind has come down, will this be easier?

Well, that is it, the light within, now.

What is the difficulty? Where do you see any objection or contradiction? What is your difficulty?

How can we understand that it has become easier? What is the effect of this descent?

Well, wait until it occurs within you and you will know it!

All right. Imagine that in a dark room you have put a spirit-lamp of the kind they used to have about fifty years ago (they had spirit-lamps in their rooms as now there are lanterns; it was a little better but more or less the same thing). So you were lighting your room with that, and then suddenly somebody invented the means of lighting it by electricity. And your spirit-lamp is replaced by a beautiful electric lamp which lights ten times better.

What is your difficulty, your problem?

You have always had a light to illumine your room—your inner room—but instead of a spirit-lamp it is now an electric lamp. That's the difference.

¹ According to the Indian terminology, the sattwic man is he who is moved by the principle of knowledge, equality and light, as opposed to the rajasic man who lives moved by his desires and passions and the tamasic man who lives in inertia and obscurity.

You do not understand? No? It is not very difficult to understand.

One wants to see that light.

See? Ah!...Enter the room, you will see it.

(*Silence*)

Is that all?

Mother, after the first question there is a sentence I don't understand: "And for the rest [they] either detain or confuse us." What is this "rest"?

Sri Aurobindo speaks of mental constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, of the suggestions and instigations of the Life-force, of the needs of the body; now, all this, these half-lights or false lights can serve a little on the path, can help us a little, and only for a while. And all that is not this, all the rest, that is to say, all the innumerable thoughts and movements, sensations and feelings one has, well, all this is of no use at all. And worse than being quite useless, this detains us on the way, that's all. It confuses us. That is to say, this creates an inner confusion and must be altogether ignored.

All the innumerable things one thinks, experiences, feels, sees, does...all that is of no use at all. Naturally, from the point of view of yoga, I mean.

(*Turning to the child who wanted to see the light*) You have still another question?

How to enter the room?

You take the key and open the door!

You must find the key.

Or you must sit before the door until you have found the word, the idea or the force which opens—as in the *Arabian Nights* tales.

That is not a joke, it is very serious. You must sit down before the door and then concentrate until you have found the key or the word or the power of opening.

If one does not try, it does not open by itself. Perhaps after thousands of years, yes, but you want it immediately—so? To do it immediately, you must sit down *obstinately* before the door till you have found the means. It may be a key, may be a word, may be a force, may be anything whatever, and you remain there before the door until it opens.

All you do not think of anything else.

Only of your door.

Is there no key-hole through which the light can escape?

A key-hole? How do you mean? A chink for the light to escape?...Perhaps it is coming out, but perhaps no one sees it also!

It is coming out.

But then that's another problem: you must open your eyes. You must learn to open your eyes, to see.

Very, very small babies do not see, very small animals too do not see, tiny baby kittens do not see. It takes them several hours or several days—they don't see.

You must learn to see.

(To be continued)

A SONNET OF SRI AUROBINDO TRANSLATED INTO FRENCH

LA LUMIÈRE DORÉE

Ta lumière dorée est descendue dans mon cerveau
Et la chambre grise du mental devient, touchée de soleil,
Une réponse brillante aux plans occultes de Sagesse,
Une illumination calme et une flamme.

Ta lumière dorée est descendue dans ma gorge,
Et toute ma parole n'est qu'un air divin
Un chant péan c'est ma seule mélodie,
Mes mots sont ivres du vin de l'Immortel.

Ta lumière dorée est descendue dans mon cœur
Passionnant ma vie de ton éternité,
Elle est devenue maintenant un temple où Tu vis
Et toutes ses passions ne visent que vers Toi.

Ta lumière dorée est descendue dans mes pieds
Ma terre est alors ton terrain de jeu et ton siège.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Traduction par Nanda Dulal Ghosh)

LIGHTS ON THE PATH

PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO FOUND BY THE MOTHER AND SOME DISCIPLES

(Continued from the issue of October, 1971)

(It was the year 1931. At that time there was a special Soup Distribution by the Mother in the late evening in the place now known as the Reception Room. About an hour before it, the Mother used to come to the Prosperity Room, the General Stores, just above. A fixed number of disciples would collect there, and the Mother would spend the time giving talks (later put together by a disciple present and published as the Third Series of the Mother's Talks) or she would play "guessing-games" in which the disciples' powers of intuition would be tested and developed. At a certain period there was a reading of passages from Sri Aurobindo's works. Each day one or other of the disciples would concentrate a little and open a book anywhere with his finger or with a paper-cutter and strike upon a passage for reading. The Mother herself did the same. This procedure went on from March 18 to May 2. A copy of the passages remained with the Editor of Mother India who was one of those attending the happy soirées. We are now publishing them in a series, both for their intrinsic value as lights on the path of Yoga and for whatever subtle side-lights they may throw on the inner movement of those who found them.)

THIS is the fire of our sacrifice! May we have strength to kindle it to its height, may it perfect our thoughts. In this all that we give must be thrown that it may become a food for the gods; this shall bring to us the godheads of the infinite consciousness who are our desire.

Let us gather fuel for it, let us prepare for it offerings...

O God, thy faces are everywhere! Thou besiegest us on every side with thy being. Burn away from us the sin.¹

Let thy face front the Enemy wherever he turns; bear us in thy ship over the dangerous waters. Burn away from us the sin!...

¹ Sin is that which excites and hurries the faculties into deviation from the good path. There is a straight road or road of naturally increasing light and truth leading over infinite levels and towards infinite vistas, by which the law of our nature should normally take us towards our fulfilment. Sin compels it instead to travel with stumblings amid uneven and limited tracts and along crooked windings
Isha Upanishad, p. 12.

As in a ship over the ocean, bear us over into felicity.

The Vedic Fire, The Arya, Vol. IV. pp. 125-28.
(Found by Nolini, April 9, 1931)

Desire is the chief enemy of spiritual perfection.

Slay then desire; put away attachment to the possession and enjoyment of the outwardness of things. Separate yourself from all objects of the mind and senses. Learn to bear and reject all the rush of the passions and to remain securely seated in your inner self even while they rage in your members, until at last they cease to affect any part of your nature. Bear and put away similarly the forceful attacks and even the slightest insinuating touches of joy and sorrow. Cast away liking and disliking, destroy preference and hatred, root out shrinking and repugnance. Let there be a calm indifference in all your nature. Look on them with the silent and tranquil regard of an impersonal spirit.

The result will be an absolute equality and the power of unshakable calm that the universal spiritual maintains in front of its creations, facing ever the manifold action of Nature. Look with equal eyes; receive with an equal heart and mind all that comes to you, success and failure, honour and dishonour, the esteem and love of men and their scorn and persecution and hatred, every happening that would be to others a cause of sorrow. Look with equal eyes on all persons, on the good and the wicked, on the wise and the foolish, on the Brahmin and the outcaste, on man at his highest and every pettiest creature. Meet equally all men whatever their relations to you, friend and ally, neutral and indifferent, opponent and enemy, lover and hater. These things touch the ego and you are called to be free from ego. These are personal relations and you have to observe all with the deep regard of the impersonal spirit. These are temporal and personal differences which you have to see but not be influenced by them; for you must fix not on these differences but on that which is the same in all, on the one self which all are, on the Divine in every creature and on the one working of Nature which is the equal will of God in men and things and energies and happenings and in all endeavour and result and whatever outcome of the world's labour.

Essays on the Gita, Vol. II. pp. 484-85.
(Selected by the Mother, April 10, 1931)

For those who can make the full surrender from the beginning, there is no question; their path is utterly swift and easy.

The Yoga and Its Objects, p. 32.
(Found by the Mother, April 10, 1931)

The danger of *tamoguṇa* is twofold, first, when the *puruṣa* thinks, identifying

himself with the *tamas* in him, "I am weak, sinful, miserable, ignorant, good-for-nothing, inferior to this man and inferior to that man, *adhama*, what will God do through me?"—as if God were limited by the temporary capacities or incapacities of His instruments and it were not true that He can make the dumb to talk and the lame to cross the hills, *mūkaṁ karoti vācālam, paṅguṁ laṅghayate gurim*,—and again when the *sadhaka* tastes the relief, the tremendous relief of a negative *śānti*, and feeling himself delivered from all troubles and in possession of peace, turns away from life and action and becomes attached to the peace and ease of inaction. Remember always that you too are Brahman and the divine Shakti is working in you; reach out always to the realisation of God's omnipotence and His delight in the *līlā*.

The Yoga and Its Objects, pp. 28-29.

(Selected by Datta, April 10, 1931)

The truth of all things is in the calm of their depths, not in the shifting inconstant wave — form on the surface. The supreme conscious Being in his divine knowledge and will and love governs their evolution—to our ignorance so often a cruel confusion—from these depths and is not troubled by the clamour of the surface.

The Synthesis of Yoga, The Arya, Vol. VI. p.144.

(Selected by Chinmayī, April 11, 1931)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 1971)

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November, 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Mamlal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.

We are now resuming the sequence interrupted by the earlier Talks which were inadvertently omitted.)

MAY 28, 1940

P: The morning paper says that two German generals are advancing with their infantry. And French and British units are trying to join and make a line of defence before they arrive.

SRI AUROBINDO: It doesn't look as if those units will be able to do it. *(After a time)* This extension of the Maginot Line seems to be a myth. There are no fortifications anywhere.

P: After the last war, if they had strengthened the fortifications, things would have been better.

SRI AUROBINDO: But where are the fortifications? They do not exist. That is why the Germans have walked over easily to Amiens and other places.

P: The Allies seem to have stemmed the tide now.

N: In one sector they are badly placed, where the Germans are attacking from the rear.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know why they didn't provide for it.

P: The R.A.F. have done very good work. They are destroying all communications, links, depôts, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: In the air and on the sea the British as well as the French are superior.

N: Daladier wanted to bluff the Germans.

SRI AUROBINDO: Bluff? They have all the necessary information. A Deputy said to Daladier, "If France is destroyed, it will be your fault." Daladier said, "No, we have been good. But in infantry we have been outclassed."

N (*giving Sri Aurobindo Udbodhan to read*): Here is a review of Nishikanto's *Alakananda*, written by one Devabrata Roy Chowdhury, who says: "Nishikanto's poetic life grew up in the shadow of Tagore's poetry; so his poems of those days are colourless like a shadow-grown tree.... Today he has found the direction towards the Beyond in the shelter of Sri Aurobindo."

SRI AUROBINDO: Tagore won't like that.

N: In this same issue has come the second instalment of your life by Girija S. Chowdhury. This man has brought out the whole history and origin of Brahmo Samaj to show its influence on and connection with your birth.

SRI AUROBINDO: What have I got to do with that? My father was an atheist.

N: Your grandfather Raj Narayan was a Brahmo. The writer links that up with your life.

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing N after taking up the copy and reading*): Look here! He says that the people of Khulna have designated the town of Khulna the playground of Aurobindo's adolescence—because my father was civil surgeon in Khulna. It is not true. Up to the age of five I was in Rangpur, as my father was in Rangpur, not in Khulna. I went to Khulna long after returning from England.

N: From 5 to 7, you were in Darjeeling's Loreto School, he says.

SRI AUROBINDO: He may have got that right. He says: "The place where Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta has not been fixed yet." Nobody has tried to fix it, and it should be done. I was born in the lawyer Manmohan Ghose's house on Theatre Road. (*Then Sri Aurobindo himself began to read and put marks in various places. He stopped at one place.*) Have I said anything against immolation of the Satis anywhere? He says I have also echoed....¹

P: Not that I know of.

EVENING

The news came that Belgium had surrendered. It was a surprise to us all.

P: King Leopold has not consulted even his Commander-in-Chief Blanchard. The Belgian Government says that it won't accept the King's order and will raise another army in France.

N: Yes, but how will it reach Belgium? It is really very extraordinary.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Commander-in-Chief is not bound to obey the King's order. The King is not the nation. The surrender means that Dunkirk—and also Calais—will fall to Germany.

P: I wonder if he has been bribed.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has always been an unreliable person used to taking many steps on his own account. His wife was better than he, and she would not have

¹ Name missed. (*Nirodhoran*)

allowed this.

N: Killed his wife?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he was to blame for the accident. The Lieutenant here, who is a son of a French General, has said that Belgium's Albert Canal is almost as impregnable as the Maginot Line. There must have been some act of treason for Belgium to give way so spectacularly.

P: It didn't hold out even for two weeks.

N: It didn't hold out at all. We've heard so much about Holland's dams and the Albert Canal!

SRI AUROBINDO: About Holland, everybody knows that it sided with Hitler. (*After some time*) The great defect of advanced democracy is that it listens to anything—to slogans, as they say—without being able to think or judge for itself. In the French army also at the beginning there was disaffection: "What are we fighting for? These generals will kill us in the war." All the slogans were in the air owing to German propaganda. That is the result of mass education. All that such education gives is information, and people don't know what use to make of it, how to apply it in the right and not the wrong way. It is already a difficult problem for educated people; what then about the masses? Hitler has openly said in his book that to carry the public, one has only to lie, to give false promises, and they will be with you. It shows now that what he has said is quite true.

P (*after some time*): Jinnah seems to be seriously ill.

SRI AUROBINDO: About two days back he gave out a statement on the Pakistan scheme.

P: This Gujarati paper says he is ill. If he goes, then...

SRI AUROBINDO (*after smiling*): Have you read what Gandhi has said in answer to a correspondent? He says that if 8 crores of Muslims demand a separate State, what else are the 25 crores of Hindus to do but surrender? Otherwise there will be civil war.

N: I hope that is not the type of conciliation he is thinking of.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not thinking of it, you say? He has actually said that and almost yielded. If you yield to the opposite party beforehand, naturally they will stick strongly to their claims. It means that the minority shall rule and the majority must submit. The minority is allowed its say, "We shall be the rulers and you are our servants. Our sarif (Koran) will be law; you have to obey." This shows a peculiar mind. I think this kind of people are a little cracked. (*Looking up*) Don't you agree?

P (*after a pause*): Rajkot seems to have some reforms now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, what has happened there? This Thakur must have done something very wrong.

P: Probably. It may be he is in debt and spending State money. He is an idiot. Virawalla also is now dead.

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean Virawalla died as a result of his fast?

N: People will take it like that.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what I have written in the *Arya*—that “soul-force” sometimes creates forces which are much more violent... Gandhi may agree to the change of constitution as a result of his fast but not Virawalla’s death. (*Laughter*)

P: But the whole public feeling against him must have weighed on him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is this new Dewan of Rajkot? I seem to have heard his name. Was he in any Legislative?

P: He is a Parsi, one of the Anklesarias. He is a barrister from Bombay.

29 MAY 1940

P: It is said that there were 300,000 Belgian troops. By their surrender, they make the position of the British Expeditionary Force extremely grave.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. There is no way out for them unless Dunkirk can hold on or if they can rush through the gap from the French line.

S: I don’t understand why King Leopold has ordered the surrender.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has always been unreliable and taking independent decisions. It was he who prevented alliance with France just before the war and he kept his wonderful neutrality. Now he has been given a castle and a pension for his service to Hitler.

S: The surrender came as a surprise even to the German commander.

N: If the army rises in revolt —

SRI AUROBINDO: That would be something.

P: The Belgian Cabinet is trying to raise a new Belgian Army.

N: Yes, but not much use. They can’t go to Belgium and fight there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Still it shows the rebellion of the people.

P: It will be like the Czech and Polish armies — with only small numbers of people.

SRI AUROBINDO: With our Sammer we can start a Czech army (*laughter*), so that they may realise the situation and learn a lesson.

N: D is passing through ups and downs. Now he tries to take a philosophical view of the Allied reverses and sets himself in the right position.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is that?

N: He says that perhaps it is necessary that the Allies should go through hardships and sufferings at the beginning. He got strength from the Mother’s message in which she has said that the Asuras can’t be victorious eternally against the Divine. The hour of Hitler’s downfall must come.

SRI AUROBINDO: That doesn’t mean it will come by the Allies. (*Laughter*)

S: No; but don’t tell him that or he will be depressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

S: It seems everything touches him badly.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you mean?

S: I mean that if anything goes wrong anywhere, it affects him. Perhaps he

becomes depressed about Subhash Bose too.

N: No, not now. He has seen through him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Subhash Bose is starting another revolution.

S: Yes, Narendra Deo calls his Forward Bloc "Backward Bloc".

SRI AUROBINDO: "Forward and Backward Bloc" would be better still. (*Laughter*)

S: In *Chandi* there are descriptions of these fights of the Asuras — I am telling Nirod as he may not have read it. So many times the Asuras attack the Mother. At the last moment, they are defeated.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the Indian tradition: up to the last moment the Asuras are victorious; and that is the general tradition as well. At the last moment, some miracle happens.

S: They also say that Shiva supports the Asuras, gives them boons.

SRI AUROBINDO: He makes many blunders.

S: And Vishnu comes to the rescue.

N: Sometimes it seems that Shiva favours one side and Parvati the opposite one. Madhusudan has depicted them like that in *Meghnad*, his epic poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Madhusudan had a sympathy for Ravana.

After this P read from a Hindi paper an article by some Arya Samajist attacking Raman Maharshi and also Agarwal — that is, one of our group — who had held a joint meditation in Gurukul. The Arya Samajist who went to Raman Maharshi said that Maharshi observes the caste system. When asked why this was so, the Maharshi replied, "Should all horses, donkeys and pigs eat from a common plate?"

S: But he doesn't believe in caste — he eats with non-Brahmins.

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have said that deliberately to the Arya Samajist.

P: Yes, I know of an Arya Samajist who had an altercation with Raman Maharshi some time ago. This is probably the man. It was said that Raman Maharshi too got excited and angry and began to shout. This man also says he became angry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Angry?

P: Yes, Brunton too has said that he gets angry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ramakrishna also used to get angry, for that matter.

P: He Says that in Gandhi's Ashram there is no caste.

SRI AUROBINDO: And why does he say that the Maharshi was jealous because he criticised him? Does one criticise out of jealousy? Gandhi doesn't believe in caste system?

P: Oh, yes he does.

S: The Maharshi has a very good relationship with Gandhiji. He sent him blessings.

SRI AUROBINDO: The sannyasins don't observe caste?

P: They do.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then what strikes him as so very strange?

S: If the Maharshi observes the caste system, it is because he doesn't want to

disturb the established order of society.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should he disturb it? It is not his business.

P: Besides, he himself takes his meals with non-Brahmins. What more can he do?

EVENING

The Radio said that King Leopold had surrendered because of military stress.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this military stress under which he had to surrender and had no time even to inform the Allies or consult the Cabinet?

P: Roger Keyes seems to have sent some confidential message to Churchill about it, which may have been that the Army was refusing to fight.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even so, did they have no time to inform the Allies? That is more than I can swallow. And if the army refuses to fight, it is a dishonour to the whole nation; in the other case, it is a dishonour only to the King.

N: They say the Germans launched a heavy attack against the Belgian Army.

SRI AUROBINDO: Just two or three days ago it was said that the Belgians were fighting gallantly.

N: The *Hindu* seems to support the King.

SRI AUROBINDO: It shows sympathy to the Belgian King's army.

S: It seems also to be generous.

SRI AUROBINDO: Generous? When the whole army is going to be destroyed, it is difficult to be generous. No, Roger Keyes doesn't clear the mystery. It seems the whole world of humanity has lost all sense of honour and truth. For the sake of self-interest one is capable of doing anything.

P: Street-fighting is going on in Dunkirk.

SRI AUROBINDO: That means it will fall into the hands of the Germans.

S: The Maharaja of Travancore has placed his whole army at the disposal of the British (*laughter*) — an army of a hundred or so.

SRI AUROBINDO: A little more, perhaps.

S: Sometimes the Maharaja of Nepal also does the same — a few thousand people.

N: At any rate they wouldn't surrender.

S: I don't know. Against mechanised warfare, what can they do?

SRI AUROBINDO: They would do very well. They have initiative, dash and daring, and they can easily adapt themselves. They would start some sort of guerilla warfare in which they excel.

S: Yes.

P: The R.A.F. are doing very good work.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how they can do much. The soldiers are pressed from east and west and if the supply from Dunkirk is cut off, then without food and ammunition how are they to hold on? If the Belgian Army has capitulated for lack

of supply, one can understand, but even then, they would have had time to inform.

N: Perhaps escape through the ports is the only way open to the B. E. F.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which ports? Ostend was in the hands of the Belgian Army. By their surrender Dunkirk would be *uncovered* unless they had sufficient troops in Dunkirk to defend it. New escape also is difficult. They may try to dash through the gap and line up with the French on the Somme. Otherwise I don't see any way. Where is the main body of the French army they speak of? Why don't they employ it now to disengage the trapped soldiers? I don't understand this warfare.

P: Weygand is organising in other parts. He is hoping to dislodge the Germans, occupy the bridges, etc. He will take a month to consolidate. Perhaps he thinks that if he brings the main army at this weak moment, it may also lose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even then this will be a tremendous loss — 300,000 people! (*After a pause*) The whole thing is absurd. Why did England send this Expeditionary Force against an army highly mechanised? Perhaps we shouldn't criticise them. India would have made a bigger mess, a Himalayan blunder as Gandhi would call it. The whole history of India has been a running away of armies from battlefields as soon as the King or their leader was killed. For instance, in the battle of Calicut after the King had fallen, the soldiers — they were of the finest type — could not stand it for a moment, they simply ran away. In England I read a book by some Englishman about the battle of Assaye. He said that when the King fell, the soldiers didn't know what to do. They simply stood at their posts and were mopped up by the British.

P: The Indian people had also no unity among themselves. They didn't think in terms of their country as a whole. Someone, in writing about the Mahrattas, said that they had tremendous national egoism but no unity, and that their system of Jagirdars was the cause of their ruin. Very often these jagirs were given as hereditary posts without any consideration of the individual's fitness. Khare, ex-Prime Minister, also said to the Mahrattas: "You don't know what Swaraj is, you never had it."

SRI AUROBINDO: They had it during Shivaji's time; at that time they were all united. Among the Sikhs too there was unity, though later on it broke down. The Rajputs of course didn't know what unity was. The ancient peoples also didn't know how to achieve it. Porus, after being defeated, allied himself with Alexander and fought against his own countrymen.

In Europe also the same thing happened during the Middle Ages, and continued even up to the early part of the reign of Louis XIV. Some provinces of France were once fighting for France, and at another time against her.

P: Yes, a part of France was sometimes calling England to come and rule her.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which part?

P: Normandy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, Normandy. At that time there was a Norman King in England, so they thought themselves to be allies. Besides, it was the period following the feudal kings and lords, so the people thought it their duty to serve their feudal

lords. They had no sense of country at that time. In spite of all that, it is remarkable that France became most united.

P: Some contemporary has written the whole of French history in two pages. He says the whole question amongst them is: who is the better of the two?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is at least something. In India, it was: who is the most powerful?

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

MUSINGS

HAVE I faith or have I no faith?
Is there the unknown or is all known?
Is there God or is there only matter?
Are there desires and thoughts or are there souls also?
These questions seal our fate.

**

There are stones and stones and stones.
There are men and men and men.
But there is a stone called the diamond.
And there is a man named Vivekananda.
Distinctions serve. And hierarchy is a Fact.

*
**

What is the difference between the life of a sadhak and a non-sadhak?
All the difference.
The life of a non-sadhak is a dead life of an imprisoned soul,
while the life of a sadhak is a developing life of a free soul.

*
**

However eminent a thinker, he cannot trap
God in his trap of thinking,
for God is a fisher who has already
trapped all the thinkers in His net.

GIRDHARLAL

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of October 1971)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in those talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But, in reconstructing from memory, the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

RAMAKRISHNA gave the Brahmic consciousness to a certain person. But a person does not come to anything if he is not fit. In fact he becomes worse. When the Guru gives, the Guru loses. But that is a way of speaking. If the disciple is receptive there is a sort of natural inflow of the force, a free descent into him. But if he is not so receptive, the Guru has to fight, as it were, to put out the force from himself. In that way he loses. On the other hand, when the disciple is open, the Guru, even if he has given much, loses nothing.

Disciples often create a lot of difficulties on the path which the Guru has to solve. The Guru thus gains experience. Moreover, in the matter of giving, though he has to put out some force, he will be strengthening the higher power, as in exercise one feels tired at the moment but is the better for it. If there is aspiration in the disciples, the force of aspiration tends to create a circle of massed power. This chakra in common meditation is of help to the people who meditate.

There is a tremendous ingathering of force in the Yogin. If he spends it in the exhibition of powers, it is waste of spiritual force. Ramakrishna could create people for his work. Vivekananda was not so effective a Guru, for his intellectuality came in the way. The Guru gives not from the intellect but from something inside. The intellect makes a mess of things. Vivekananda did not go much beyond giving some new ideas to Nivedita and Indianising her. She got some glimpses, but she did not build up or advance. Ramakrishna was slowly building up Abhedananda when one day Vivekananda gave the latter the vision of Vedantic *samatā*. Ramakrishna at once came down saying that all his work had been smashed.... The more disciples you

have, before you have full siddhi, the more you lose. Of course, if the siddhi is there, it does not matter.

The right methods of birth control do not reduce vitality, they stop production of unhealthy children and restrain the sex impulse. Gandhi's logic holds that birth control diminishes vital force. That is only when people use it to help them indulge in license. Regeneration does not come when there is merely restraint of the outer act. Only when there is complete mental control of the vital impulse and abstention from the act, and when the energy is taken up, there is regeneration. If there is desire in the mind, there is loss of force, just as there is in the sexual act. Many people, who all the while think they have control, play on sex with their imagination. The Yogin must have complete control of all the movements of Kama, sex-desire.

Though the laws of sound were not scientifically studied by the musicians of old, their instruments show perfect agreement with these laws. They had practical intuition of the thing. Even so in medicine. For example, in feeling the pulse it is the same artery with the same blood, but the three fingers placed on it know the disease by a subtle rhythm. It is intuition. The foundations of medicine were laid in India, and medical science passed from India to the West through Greece. In philosophy and psychology the Indians had no equal, though they may yet have to learn more. We had political science, such as no other nations had; only the standards were different — that is, the forms of government.

The Ascension of Mary in the Roman Catholic doctrine signifies the change of the physical consciousness, the physical nature, into the divine. The idea of Jesus being an incarnation was borrowed from the tradition of the East about the birth of a God in man, as the son of man, — like the Veda's birth of the Eternal Sun in the human consciousness.

Q. In Indian psychology, where do percepts belong, and where concepts?

Percepts and concepts belong to Manas (sense-mind) and Buddhi (intellect) respectively.

Theoretically we can do without food. The only difficulty is that the tissues of the body have to be replenished. That can be done by changing the vital elements into the physical. The Yogin does not exercise any will or effort. The Yogic force is there in him. If you can bring down the Ananda, then with the inflow of the Amrita into the body the body no longer needs food.

Bengal has led the rest of India recently. But each province in India has had its day. The Maharattas, the Sikhs, all have been leaders. The cult of Shakti worship has developed great vital force in Bengal. The spirituality concerned is emotional rather

than Vedantic, it tends to be outward and impure and covers up the pure psychic movement as in certain phases of Vaishnavism. The emotional intensity is often a weakness, for it is not backed by patience and solidity. The Bengalis have developed a great vital rapidity. It is the same vital rapidity that served Ramakrishna in getting one thing after another quickly in his Sadhana. But rapidity is not organisation and he did not stop to organise anything. What others took to achieve in many years, he got in 3 days. Another characteristic of the race's mental intuition (not in the intuitive mind proper) is a direct opening to the above. In Ramakrishna there is extraordinary intuitive activity. As an instance of the remarkable vital rapidity of the Bengali, compare the movements in politics of Das, with those of a man, say, like Ranade. There is a dynamic push in the Bengali.

Our ideas of time and space are mental ideas, abstractions. How do you know that things exist in space? How do you know that things exist? By the mind. We look at things through the mind. We cannot prove that things exist in space. The mind says that things are extended in space and that consciousness is not extended. The fact is that consciousness is extended. Are you aware of your consciousness? Even consciousness is an abstraction to the mind. When you are angry you feel it physically in your nerves, and since anger is consciousness, consciousness is thus extended. Nothing is apart from consciousness. When my consciousness gets widened it moves, though not in physical space, and there must be something in which it moves. Even physical space is an extension of consciousness.... Time is not a creation of the mere mind, it is a reality in itself, it is a movement of force, or rather (the word "movement" does not convey the meaning) it is a force in eternal action. In a certain experience you see that it is static. In supermind, past, present and future are one movement, you have only to look back and to look forward. Time also is an extension of consciousness, but of a different kind of extension from space. Time is supra-physical, it is an inner element. The inner being moves in time, backward and forward, as the physical being does in physical space.

In the vital world time and space are different from ours. The organisation of consciousness is different, and with a different organisation things appear to you in a different manner. Time, the Upanishad says, is the Creator. From that standpoint we can speak of time as the force of eternal action. But that is consciousness. In fact everything is consciousness. If you don't accept that matter is conscient, either you have to accept Shankara's reasoning and dismiss the world as Maya, an illusion created by the mind or fall back on the opposite theory, the materialistic, that mind is the creation of matter. But for us matter and space are an extension of consciousness. Shankara argued not from his experience, but rationally, from the purely philosophic side.

Q: Do Gods hurt us?

Not intentionally. But if you go against them—that is, against the Eternal Laws—you get hurt, just as when you go against a wall. Mental ideals cannot be realised on

earth because mind has not the power to effectuate them, it cannot change the physical consciousness and external being, it can only make some alterations here and there. Even if the supermind comes down into the mind and vital it will not do, it must be brought down into the physical consciousness and external being, otherwise the mind and vital do not know themselves and do not know and realise the complete Truth.

Q: Are there Gods on the physical plane?

Yes, there is the Divinity in the Sun, in the solar system, the principle of Divinity in the physical. There are Gods behind the spirits of Fire and Water; these spirits are the delegates of the Gods or their *gana*. The Gods do not go about doing all works, they have their *gana*. These are not so individualised as the Gods, they are elemental; likewise, the *genii* of the forest, of the houses, are minor deities. There is the Earth Mother, an individualised being—and limited. This is not Annam Brahman—Brahman who is Matter. That is something impersonal. A God is personal. If man at his present stage comes into touch with the world of the Gods (the lower Gods, mental, vital, are not supra-mental) he goes to sleep; his soul passes into a certain state in which it involves itself, and is not “wakeful and does not enjoy” (*andham tamas*). The soul, if it has to evolve, may come down; otherwise it may remain there till the next cycle. Man does not find the company of the Gods pleasant, just as an uncultivated man does not find the company of the cultivated pleasant.

There are hundreds of kinds of Samadhi. In Samadhi the mind loses itself, it does not enter the supermind nor does it bring it down.

(1) When the mind thus loses itself without entering into the supermind, it is Sushupti Samadhi (deep sleep trance). In Sushupti Samadhi you feel something massed and powerful, the Ishwara with eyes shut, the energy not thrown out in action, all withheld in Tapasya.

(2) If you pass higher in that direction, you reach the Absolute who is featureless. Nirvikalpa Samadhi is where there is no differentiation, “no truth or falsehood, not even consciousness” in a definable sense—there is a sort of “luminous inconscience”. Not that the Absolute has really no consciousness—only it is not anything that can be called so. This state may either be “pure existence” or, if you are a Buddhist, “non-existence”. It is not Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Our Yoga has nothing to do with such Samadhi. We do not lose our mind and enter into Samadhi like that; we must be wakeful and enjoy what is realised. The path of the Sannyasi has always seemed to me so lazy, doing nothing, taking no active part in work.

I attained the Akshara Brahman, the Formless Eternal in three days while meditating with Lele at Baroda. One stage of the Akshara is full of peace; external things do not exist for us there. They are a kind of cinema show for the eyes and we do not care for what is going on—whether we are hurt or whether anybody is hurt. Obviously the mind does not register the impressions, it is something other that is active.

Another stage is full of Ananda, Bliss; not that there is no peace, peace is behind,

but you are the Ananda. To say that you have no cares, that you are satisfied, is a way of speaking; for there is no separate you—there is only the Ananda and you are that, you feel that you are the Ananda yourself.

For two or three months I continued in the Akshara state. Then a command came to me from above like that (*waving his hand*), and I came out of that state. It is not owing to any human consideration of selfishness or selflessness that I got out of the state. I could have remained in the Akshara, full of joy and nothing to do, but my work was not there. If I was selfless in coming out of that state, one might as well say that I am selfish even in this path, for I seek greater perfection. Human considerations are nothing in these states. It is all the working of the Divine Will. If you look from the supermind, man and his evolution are as nothing. The only thing that matters is the evolution of God Himself.

Ramakrishna made a distinction between Jivakoti and Ishwarakoti. Men have to evolve up to a certain point, after which they pass into the Ishwarakoti—that is, they become one with the Ishwara, and then they are not bound to birth or non-birth; up to that stage they remain the Jivakoti.

Environment influences the vital part of man as we see in the case of mountaineers. On the subtle physical also there is an influence: for example, domiciles in a new place change in appearance: the cut of their face comes to resemble that of the inhabitants; those who lived and died there through a long time create a sort of archetype, to which newcomers gradually conform.

The mind's abstract idea of a triangle (in geometry) practically exists nowhere, but it includes all possible triangles that we can see, each particular class of forms. The fundamental turn of mind is the geometrical turn (not the general mathematical turn): it makes, constructs, arranges according to a pattern. The vital movement is free from that, it is fluid. The faculty of mind which takes interest, not in mathematics, science, but in poetry, literature is more subtle.

The different planes have different colours. The colour of the physical is red; of the vital purple and green, of the mental yellow. Golden, white and blue are spiritual colours. Golden is the colour of truth and knowledge; white, of purity and essential power; blue is akin to Ananda, it is not the colour of Ananda itself. The mental symbol of supermind is the square. The mental symbol of the whole of existence is two triangles in opposite positions, the apex of one touching the apex of the other—the three planes down below meet the three higher planes and the point of the meeting is supermind.

On the vital plane there is no evolution; what you see there is types—particular fixed formations, of temperament, character, etc. There is the erotic type, there is the destructive type, there is the type seeking power, any number of types are there.

These beings may help or harm us. For example, anger may help us sometimes.

Language originally began as simple sounds, each sound having its own *guna* or sense-quality which gave it meaning. Ideas and complex sounds came later. Sounds were not composite at first; in many languages the sounds giving the meaning of 'I', 'you' and 'he' are the same. In Tamil also you can find the resemblances. The Mediterranean and Semitic languages have really the same roots as the Aryan.

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

A TALK BY NIRODBARAN WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS NOTEBOOK

26-12-1934

MYSELF: Today I lost my temper in my carpentry work over a workman's disobedience and insolence. He refused to clean the place at the end of the work; I insisted and had it done. Perhaps I did wrong by losing my temper, but how can a worker be rude and insolent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that was the mistake. It was not a mistake to insist (quietly, but firmly it should be) on his doing his duty—but by losing the temper you raise issues and make it a case of Greek meets Greek. Besides that, you must learn to use a silent inner force on the man or else call in Mother's force, as C suggested. It may not be successful at first through want of practice and skill in the handling, but when you become an expert in that yogic way, you will be surprised at the additional power of effectuation it brings. In all action the yogin uses this inner force to support the outer means—it is one difference between yogic and ordinary action.

[C here is Chandulal; so let me tell you a little about him now.

Chandulal was our "Liliputian engineer", as Sri Aurobindo called him. He was short in stature, but very sweet in nature. He was the brother of our famous and sweet-tempered Vasudha. He was a fine man, an able engineer, knew French well, spoke Tamil fluently, and was a really sincere sadhak.

Unfortunately he passed away after an operation. I still remember the scene. He had been removed to the General Hospital where he was operated upon, rather hastily, and things turned out badly. As the proverb goes, "The operation was successful but the patient died,"—I happened to be there at the time. When I came back with the sad news, the Mother was sitting where her reclining chair is kept now, on the first floor—and Vasudha was beside her—they were both talking. It was about 4 p.m., I think. I came running and the Mother looked at me, and must have felt the vibration. I passed the news—she gave a start. "Ah!" That was all. Vasudha's condition I leave you to imagine. The sister and brother had been very fond of each other, and the tragic turn was so sudden. We had never thought things would end like that. So that was Chandulal.

Now, I continue our discussion.]

MYSELF: If this is karmayoga, why not do it through literature where one doesn't

face such troubles?—and others will surely have transformation of nature without having to fight so many complicated factors?

SRI AUROBINDO: They have plenty of complicated factors to fight and their confinement to literature does not make their fight any easier. Work like this gives much more opportunities of inner change provided one is ready to take advantage. You are making good progress, and I think if you had remained only a literary gent, only a medical gent, it would have taken longer.

MYSELF: When I wrote about the absolute newness of your yoga you swore at me in German.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not my yoga—Karmayoga. The Karmayoga element in my yoga is not new.

MYSELF: Yes, in the Gita it is there, to be sure, but has it been done through timber-cutting, bread-kneading, cooking, etc., etc.? Janakas, Arjunas might do it, but not Nirods or Rama Shyamas?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing new in that either. It has always been a rule of Karmayoga that one must be ready to do any work for the Divine or with the spiritual consciousness.

Why not Ramas Shyamas? Plenty of Ramas and Shyamas have done that kind of Karmayoga and done it easily enough.

29-12-1934

MYSELF: I hope you won't say like Ramakrishna that these things—outer knowledge, beauty of expression, thought power etc.—don't matter since they don't lead us to the Divine. You have said we are children of an intellectual age. Should we not follow in the footsteps of the Master?

SRI AUROBINDO: Essentially Ramakrishna was right. The literature etc., belongs to the instrumentation of the divine life. It is of importance only if one accepts that aim and even so, not of importance to everybody. It is not necessary for instance for everybody to have any mastery of English literature or to be a poet or a scientist or acquainted with all science (an encyclopaedia in knowledge). What is more important is to have an instrument of knowledge that will apply itself accurately, calmly, perfectly in all that it has to handle.

MYSELF: I am rather shocked to hear of D's behaviour lacking all common sense, not to speak of yogic attitude, and that too after living here for so many year.

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate it was not Yoga that upset him. He never proposed to do any—he was interested only in medicine. That he always said was his Yoga—to read, to study, to experiment, to learn more and more about medicine. But perhaps you will say that Yoga of works is responsible.

[By the way, it was D's failure that made room for my 'success' in the Dispensary. I mean I stepped into his shoes, but kept my head steady. That was due to Guru's grace.]

MYSELF. At one time I thought that old people are better off since they have a less active vital, but Doctorbabu and Bhupalbabu have demolished that myth. Doctorbabu who had a genuine seeking went away for a flimsy reason! With Amal the same fate!

[Doctorbabu—Dr. Banerji—was a very able and efficient physician. The first time he came here was because Sri Aurobindo had cabled to him when the Mother had been ill. Of course he had been in contact with the Ashram before he came here. His reputation as a doctor was naturally very well-founded. And Bhupalbabu—Bhupal Bose—was the father-in-law of Sri Aurobindo. When he came here, the first question he asked us was, “*Onār bhunḍi āchché?*”—“Does he have a paunch?” And the second question was, “What about the colour of his skin? I hear it is golden.” He intended to stay on but, poor man, went away rather soon. Perhaps because he had left his wife in Bengal and had to join her.]

SRI AUROBINDO: He (Doctorbabu) has always been doing that—doing the navette between his family and the Ashram. Amal has left the Ashram?

MYSELF: Then I thought if one has big experiences, he will be safe, but Y has shattered that delusion and this man is said to have had overmental experiences! He also gone! I have heard that you don’t approve of one’s going.

SRI AUROBINDO: He had no overmental experiences—he had something of the opening in the cosmic mind and vital in the intermediate zone—and that plenty besides him have done and are doing. I have explained this before.

We approved of it. He went to arrange about his aunt’s property as the family wants to live here (not in the Ashram, but outside).

[This is the gentleman about whom Amal in one of his talks wittily says that “he was undermined by overmind”. He was very proud of Sri Aurobindo’s letters to him—and he made much capital out of them.

As for Amal himself, he had left only on a fortnight’s visit to Bombay with the “Yes” of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And I am happy to tell you that, whether he might be on a short visit or a long one, there was never any question of his leaving the Ashram.]

MYSELF: I am rather puzzled by these failures or upsettings. I fear sometimes the same fate overtaking me.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose you always avoided getting into a railway train because there might be a collision or into a steamer for similar reasons and certainly you would never dare go in an aeroplane!

[I read the rest from *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, p. 173.]

What you say may apply to everybody because everybody has things in him which conflict with the Yoga. Logical conclusion: Nobody should try anything in which anybody has failed or in which there is a possibility of failure! I am afraid most human activities would stop on that principle except food, sleep and sex and perhaps only the first two. But after all not even these, for people die in their sleep and others die of their food by poison, indigestion or otherwise. So to be safe

one must neither eat, sleep nor do anything else—much less do Yoga. Q.E.D.

[I have found quite often, though not very often, that after quarreling with Sri Aurobindo some good things come. (*Laughter*) All this grumbling was on the second of the month and the following experience came on the fourth!]

MYSELF: In meditation, I had again a stillness of the inner and outer being, but the body was gradually bending down. I was in a state of light sleep and I could remember that you were there and others, besides. Perhaps a full stomach was responsible? I send you a letter from C.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are going into inner consciousness and away from the outer; that is all.

Is that the medical man's explanation of the experience? If a full stomach can produce experiences, you might perhaps triple or quadruple your rations.

Can't decipher C. The doctor has prescribed a treatment and he can't afford it? Is that it? Or what else?

[Now, on the fifth Sri Aurobindo becomes more human, as I become less so—I again quarrel with him.]

MYSELF: Forgive me if I quarrel with you today. You have hinted that I am a coward. I am afraid of trains, steamer journeys, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a coward in every human being, precisely the part in him which insists on "safety"—for that is certainly not a brave attitude. I admit, however, that I would like safety myself if I could have it—perhaps that is why I have always managed instead to live dangerously and follow the dangerous paths dragging on many poor Nirods in my train.

MYSELF: You wrote the other day that you had lived dangerously. All that we know is that you did not have enough money in England;—also in Pondicherry in the beginning. In Baroda you had a handsome pay, and in Calcutta you were quite well off.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was so astonished by this succinct, complete and impeccably accurate biography of myself that I let myself go in answer! But I afterwards thought that it was no use living more dangerously than I am obliged to. So I rubbed all out. My only answer now is!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I thank you for the safe rich comfortable and unadventurous career you have given me. I note also that the only danger man can run in this world is that of the lack of money. Karl Marx himself could not have made a more economic world of it! But I wonder whether that was what Nietzsche meant by living dangerously?

[On examining my notebook I saw that he had written a whole page in pencil and erased the whole thing.]

Myself: I am rather grieved to see that you rubbed off what you had written, and that my attempts to draw you out have failed. Everybody says that unless we do this we shall never be able to know anything about your life.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the devil should you know anything about it?... If you don't realise that starting and carrying on for ten years and more a revolutionary

movement for independence in a country wholly unprepared for it is not living dangerously, no amount of puncturing of your skull with words will give you that simple perception. And as to the Yoga, you yourself were perorating at the top of your voice about its awful, horrible, pathetic and tragic dangers. So—

MYSELF: I beg to submit my apologies. I committed this folly because of ignorance of facts. Believe me, I did not know that you were the brain behind the revolutionary movement and its real leader till I read the other day what X had written about you. Now I really know what is meant by the phrase, "Living dangerously".

SRI AUROBINDO: Wait a second. I have admitted nothing about X—only to having conspired and started and maintained while I was in the field a movement for independence. That used at least to be a matter of public knowledge. I do not commit myself to more than that. My dear fellow, I was acquitted of sedition twice, and of conspiracy to wage war against the British Raj once and each time by expressly British magistrates, judges or judge. Does not that prove conclusively my entire harmlessness and that I was a true Ahimsak?¹

[So you see, trying to draw him out, I also drew out "My dear fellow"! You have to get a whack on the back, in order to get some reward! (*Laughter*)]

MYSELF: I am stunned to see you mention yoga and other human activities in the same breath. Is it not Sri Krishna who said that out of thousands very few seek him and still fewer get him?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are those who try for Govt. posts and only a few get them! It is the same principle everywhere.

MYSELF: Let me tell you how a born yogi felt and feels about yoga. He says often to us that on many occasions he has felt like running away never mind to which hell! What then about us, born non-yogis?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware that there are born yogis and unborn yogis. All have their vital and mental difficulties, whether born or unborn.

MYSELF: You have called around you or rather we have come to you ("I call no one," I hear you say in a thundering voice, but don't you really call even from within?) for a yoga which seems to me a great gamble like that of Monte Carlo and to have collected disciples who are a jumble of assorted elements.

SRI AUROBINDO: Whom have I called?

If they were not, they would not be representative of the world which has to be changed.

MYSELF: And this gambling fight is more against forces unseen than seen. We eat hostile forces, breathe them, feed them, exchange them, do everything except see and trample them—swarming micro-organisms!

SRI AUROBINDO: So is all life on earth—a complex of seen and unseen forces and an obscure and ignorant struggle.

After all there are plenty of people here who are going pretty well; why empha-

¹ practitioner of non-violence.

size only the comparatively few who have *fallen out* or are in serious trouble? Each has his difficulties, no doubt, but how on earth do you expect so high a path to be without them?

MYSELF: To add to all this, you hardly take an initiative and ask persons to do this or that. Your principle is to give a long rope either to hang oneself or have a taste of bitter cup.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am to put everybody into leading strings and walk about with them or should it be to rope in their nose? Supermen cannot be made like that—the long rope is necessary.

MYSELF: When I went on reading and reading in the godown you said nothing till the blow came.

SRI AUROBINDO: Reading in the godown does not end tragically as a rule.

MYSELF: D is doing the same. Yet it can't be denied that he originally came to do yoga. In spite of it he is caught in the intricate net of the blessed forces and gives up the greater pursuit for the lesser.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not reading medical books that was the cause of D's serious upset. It was the usual causes coupled with something more. But as all that is private, I can't go into it.

MYSELF: I come for yoga with all sincerity but end by being a tool in their hands. Isn't it tragic and pathetic? This side of the shield I request you to see.

SRI AUROBINDO: Gracious heavens! You *are* really a poet.

MYSELF: "So what is your point?", you may ask. "One shouldn't do yoga?" Certainly one should. I am only trying to establish my proposition that one is never sure in yoga or only a few are.

SRI AUROBINDO: One is never sure in anything. It is absurd in this world to say, "I will only do what is sure and absolutely safe"—especially in anything great.

MYSELF: Your caustic satire about railways is, with all apology, a little off the point. Firstly, I have dared yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not go on daring—instead of wailing because there is no safety?

MYSELF: In railways etc. the journeys are safe; hostile forces are not so villainous. But even after Herculean efforts, the path of yoga is not a jot easier.

SRI AUROBINDO: You ought to read the *Matn*. Every now and then a tremendous collision and holocaust. I admit that in India railway is slow and scanty and therefore—though not quite—safe. Anyway, what about aeroplanes?

MYSELF: Ramakrishna had a word of hope for his disciples and used to say এখানে যাবা এসেছে সবাইব হবে (all those who have come here will realise). You don't or won't give any, not even a quarter. You might say it is a greater Truth, but we have greater Divines as well.

SRI AUROBINDO: He had a few disciples round him—here there is a crowd of 150—so his assurance was not a big sporting flutter. But what idd হবে (will realise) mean?

MYSELF: For this greater Truth if some fall out, what matters? The wheel of Jagannath must roll on and the Divine has no tears for them, for he is beyond dualities.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if I fall out myself, I will not weep! I will try again.

MYSELF: It is very problematic, however, how many will reach your Heaven alive, like Yudhishthir.

SRI AUROBINDO: And his dog. You have forgotten the dog.

MYSELF: I am afraid most of us will have the fate of the Pandavas — barring the ladies!

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce has sex to do here? Don't be too medical.

MYSELF: Because medical science says that their physiological apparatus is more suitable for the psychological attitude of self-abnegation which is also the essential desideratum for yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: This is the only thing for which their physiological apparatus works? I fear there are other things, both in male and female which are not essential desiderata for yoga.

Apart from the sense of humour — I have never said that yoga or that this yoga is a safe and easy path — what I say is that anyone who has the will to go through can go through. For the rest if you aim high there is always the danger of a steep fall if you misconduct your aeroplane. But danger is for those who allow themselves to entertain a double being, aiming high but also indulging their lower nature and hankerings. What else can you expect when people do that? You must become single-minded, then the difficulties of the mind and vital will be overcome. Otherwise those who oscillate between their heights and their abysses, will always be in danger till they have become single-minded — that applies to the 'advanced', as well as to the beginners. These are facts of nature — I can't pretend for anybody's comfort that they are otherwise. But there is the fact also that nobody need keep himself in this danger. One-mindedness (একনিষ্ঠ), surrender to the Divine, faith, true love for the Divine, complete sincerity in the will, spiritual humility (real, not formal), there are so many things that can be a safeguard against any chance of eventual downfall. Slips, stumbles, difficulties, upsets every one has and can't be assured against these things, but if one has the safeguards, they are transitory, help the nature to learn and are followed by a better progress.

A TALK TO THE STUDENTS BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

DECEMBER 21, 1970

I LEARNED that you want to know something about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, from me. But then there are three lines of approach: you want to know about them, know of them or know them. Of course the last is the best. Indeed if you want to know something you must become it. Becoming gives the knowledge. Becoming Sri Aurobindo and the Mother means what? Becoming a portion of them, a part and parcel of their consciousness — that is what we are here for. And if you can do that, you know enough....

I had intended precisely to talk about this because this is your period for studying Sri Aurobindo, isn't it? Once I told you, I think, how to study or approach Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in order to read them or understand their writings. There are two things: studying and reading; I made a distinction between the two. To study Sri Aurobindo is — I won't say fruitless, that is too strong a word, but it can only be an aid or a supplementary way. Study means: you take the text, you understand each word and phrase; if you don't understand, you take a dictionary and try to catch the external meaning expressed by the words. That may be necessary but it is not the way to approach their works.

Simply to read them is sufficient. Read, it does not matter what you understand or what you don't, simply read and wait. In studying, you approach them with your external mind, your external intelligence. But what is there in the text is beyond your mind, beyond your intelligence. And to understand mentally means you drive your intellect forward into the thing. It is an effort and takes you only to the outside of the thing. It is an exercise of your brain, developed in that way, but it doesn't take you very far. Instead of that, suppose you could keep quiet, silence your mind, and only read, without trying to understand, and wait for what is there in the text, to enter into you. Instead of your intelligence driving forward, pushing forward and trying to catch the thing, let the thing come into you; for what is there in their writings is not words and phrases, dead material, it is something very living, something conscious, that they have expressed in the words, phrases and the sound and rhythm. And I may tell you that each sentence anywhere, not to speak of *Savitri*, is a living being with whom you have to make acquaintance — not that you understand or explain, but it is a living being, an entity, a friend, even a Lover whom you have to know. And your attempt in that way will be rewarded. You will enjoy much more. You may ask: "Just because I open a book and read, how can the lines come to me?"

But I say they are living entities — if you approach they come into you. The consciousness, the being in each line comes to you. And you find how beautiful it is. This is an approach of love, not of the intellect to understand and explain. Take, for example, the very first verse of *Savitri*:

“It was the hour before the Gods awake.”

It is a Mantra, a living person, how beautiful it is, you needn't understand much, and a whole world is there.

Or take the opening sentence of *The Life Divine* — the rolling cadence of the vast ocean is there. It brings you a sense of vastness, a sense of Infinity and takes you there. And, as I said, it is a very living entity and personality.

Here is the whole passage:

“The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation, — for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment, — is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last, — God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.”

I say there is a personality behind it and you have to make acquaintance with that personality. That is what I meant when I said: to become it, by an approach through love, an approach through your soul. Even in studies you shouldn't approach with the mere intellect, mere understanding; however fine an understanding or intellect you may have, it won't lead you very far. Only through your soul you can go far. Even intellectual things can be approached through your soul—because the soul is the very essence of all your faculties and being. The soul is not mere consciousness, mere being, it gathers in all the elements of your personality. The seeds of your mind, your vital, even of the physical personality, the true physical personality, are there in your soul, and you can establish a true relation with things and persons through that part of your being—your soul. I say the soul is not very far from you because you are that—rather your mind, your vital, your physical are away from you; they are not your true personality. It is your soul that is nearest to you.

In this connection you may remember what the Mother has said more than once. What is one here for? What are the children here for? And what is she giving here in the school, in the playground, in all the activities? It is not simple efficiency in the outer activities that is given here, or meant to be given here. For such things one can get outside in a more successful way—external efficiency of your intellect, of your mind, of your vital capacity and your physical strength—the Russian or the German type. Our records don't reach theirs, do they? But we don't aspire for those records. For, as the Mother has said: “I am giving here something which you won't get any-

where in the world—nowhere except here.” In your external expression you may cut a very poor figure: low marks—but that is not the sign of the Truth that we acquire here. You acquire it even without your knowing it. When you are in the swimming pool you are soaked all through, aren’t you? You can’t help it; so here also; even without your knowing it you are soaked with the inner consciousness of your soul. It is a very precious thing—the only precious thing in the world. And through that, you see, if you study, you learn—if you approach that way, you will get another taste, another interest in things.

When I was reading with Sri Aurobindo, he didn’t lay much stress upon the grammar or the language—just the most elementary grammar that was necessary. He used to put me in contact with the life, the living personality of the poet—what he was, what he represented in his consciousness. That was the central theme, because a great poet means a status of consciousness; in order to understand his consciousness you must become identified with his being.

Amrita also used to say the same thing, because he was learning the Gita from Sri Aurobindo. He could feel the spirit of Krishna and the spirit of Arjuna throughout—their relations and the atmosphere they created. It is not the mere lesson, the teaching, that’s important—that is secondary. The person is the primary thing. And the person in the book or outside, you can approach only through your soul, through love. The soul alone can love.

I think I told you that once somebody asked me: “You speak of the soul but where is it?”

I said: “It is very near you; still you don’t believe. If you see into yourself quietly, you will find that there are very many good things in you, not only bad things—bits perhaps, shades or shadows perhaps, but you know this is a good thought in you, this is a noble impulse, a sweet feeling. Each one has all these things, you have only to recognise them. All this is the expression of the soul in you. The beautiful, the luminous, the noble things that appear to you, in your consciousness, from time to time, all come from your soul.” Even the greatest villain has such moments. You remember Lady Macbeth—known as the cruellest woman; well, she said about Duncan, “I would have killed him myself but he looked like my father”—well, that is the feeling even she had. So don’t despair, even the weakest among us should not despair. First of all, each one has a soul, and secondly we have the strong support of the Mother. It is the nature of the Divine, that even if you don’t think of the Divine He thinks of you. It’s true, very true; because you are a part of the Divine. Only you have consciously to concentrate on that part, that portion; then gradually it will increase.

Q: What is the distinction you make between “to know about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother,” and “to know of them”?

A: “About” means what a man does, what his profession is, his occupation—*kimā sīta vrajeta kim?* and “of” means his personality, his character, nature, the

other is merely the movement of the consciousness.

Q: Did Sri Aurobindo read out poetry to you?

A: Yes.

Q: Loudly?

A: Yes. (*Laughter*)

Q: Is there an echo in your ears? (Laughter)

A: I remember it very well, when he was reading *Eric*—when he had just written it. The Veda, of course, I heard very often.

Q: The students would like to know very much what Sri Aurobindo's voice was like.

A: I have to describe it? (*Laughter*) That I can't; can't describe! He refused to be caught in the tape. We proposed it to him; he simply refused.

21.12.1970.

ENDLESS THE DAWN

IN sequences remote from memory's call
I dreamed a sky, a living fire of bliss.
Moods, then suffused with altar incense spires,
Come pain-etched now in ice and crystal nights.

Slender blossoms on thread-like boughs
Sigh softly as the loving hand draws near;
And all these fears of loneliness
Vanish at the moment's fleeting touch.

Through forested domains our feet shall find
The radiant paths of light Her children know;
Endless the songs, the massive rhythm beats,
Endless the dawn for the soul's unerring flight.

RICHARD EGGENBERGER

A TALK TO THE YOUTH CAMP BY AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

OCTOBER 9, 1971

(A transcription, edited in places, from a shorthand report)

WHEN I was young I was considered a writer of poetry. I believe I am still a poet though very few may know it and my face can hardly show it.

At times I am a bit of a musician too : as you have just seen, I can blow my own trumpet.

Poets, musicians, painters—all artists—are credited with a very lively imagination. But by no stretch of imagination can I figure myself as still young and, therefore, as having the right to talk to you with a sympathetic spirit.

In this age of dynamic disrespect for old fogeys, I could not help wondering why I had been picked on to address you. I asked myself, "Am I fit to do so?" Then I remembered Oscar Wilde. He does not exactly appear to be a writer coming naturally to the mind of an aspirant to spirituality. But, in the first place, we are in old French India, and in the French language the word "spiritual"—which is "spirituel" on French lips—most often means "intellectually sparkling". Oscar Wilde was surely that. And, in the second place, the memory of Wilde came to me in the form of his epigram: "The only way to remain young is to go on repeating the follies of our youth." Well, I committed one great folly in my youth—or so it was considered. And I have been repeating it for years and in that way I can certainly claim to be still a young man.

Before I committed it I had the desire to go to Oxford for higher studies after my B.A. in Bombay. My grandfather, on whom I was dependent, turned down my proposal. He said, "If you go to England you'll bring back an English wife. And I will never stand for that." I assured him that I would not bring back an English wife. He smelled sophistry there and remained negative. I had to accept the English-wifelessness. Then, after sometime I began to be interested in Indian Yoga. For nearly a year my grandfather watched me. Seeing worse and worse signs of Yoga he at last came out with the suggestion that I should go to Oxford. According to him, an English wife was far preferable to the Divine Beloved!

But I refused. He said Yoga was a great folly. It was a folly I wholeheartedly committed and, on the strength of its persistence even now, I can qualify by Oscar Wilde's standard to address you.

In the days of Sri Krishna, the kind of folly I committed took the form of leaving

everything the worldly-wise would value and running after his flute-music. So powerful was his flute that it has sounded through the centuries and it was its music that I also heard in my twenty-third year. Sri Aurobindo in a splendid line of poetry has referred to its call and to the secret sustenance and guidance it always gives us in our passage through the difficulties of life:

Ever we hear in the heart of the peril a flute go before us.

Following that lure I came to Pondicherry—to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

To look for the Divine seems to the common eye a rather far-fetched folly. Actually it is just the opposite. To drive that point home I cannot do better than bring in Sri Krishna again and make a small digression to an episode in the Mahabharata.

You know that Draupadi was dragged to the court of Duryodhana and threatened that her sari would be taken off. Strip-tease had not yet come into fashion and so Draupadi was quite bashful. In full view of the court Duryodhana's henchman started pulling at her sari. Draupadi did not know to whom to turn. She thought of Sri Krishna the Avatar and appealed to him in her mind. She cried out, "O Lord of the highest heaven, come to my help!" There was no response. The poor girl became more desperate. She sent out again a cry, "O Master of the three worlds, help me!" No reply still—and more and more folds of the sari came out. Once again Draupadi raised her heart's plea, "O Ruler of the four quarters of the earth, rush to my rescue!" All in vain—nothing resulted. Draupadi was really at a loss. Then she cried out in a final intensity, "O You who dwell deep in my own heart, come!" At once Sri Krishna appeared before her with his hand gesturing *abhaya*—"Have no fear." And you know the sequel. The sari went on unwinding endlessly. Draupadi could not be stripped at all.

Later she chided Sri Krishna, "Why did you take so long to come?" Sri Krishna sweetly and coolly replied, "If I have to come from the highest heaven or from the three worlds or even from the four quarters of the earth, won't it take some time? But when you summoned me from your own heart, there was no distance to be crossed. Naturally I came at once."

So, you see, to seek the Divine we do not have to go far. He dwells within ourselves. He is as near and natural as our own heart. His flute is always playing there. And hearing it there I found that Yoga was not at all an unusual thing to do. However young you may be, you can always get in touch with the Divine's luminous presence. And indeed the story of Brindavan where Sri Krishna lived and fluted is a story of young people. Sri Krishna himself was very, very young and young too were those who went after him. Most of them were girls. When I look around now, I see that most of you are young girls and thus to talk of seeking the Divine is quite apt on this occasion.

How to get more and more in touch with the Supreme Indweller is the whole business of Sadhana. If you ask me what is the simplest way, I shall quote to you three words of the Mother—"Remember and offer." Wherever you are, whatever you do, you can always think of the Divine, and you can always make an offering of

yourself and of your doings. There is nothing too small, too trivial to be offered. Suppose I put this walking stick of mine in some place. Well, even that action can be and should be a gesture of offering. The inward movement has to be—"I am giving my stick to you, O God." To take in everything into the practice of offering is to make Yoga an integral part of your life.

It is not by cutting yourself off from people or by shutting out activity and locking yourself up in an impenetrable Samadhi that you meet the Divine. Yoga means being in touch with the Divine's presence every minute. It is an all-time job, as Sri Aurobindo has often said.

And, if you live out the Mother's formula of remembering and offering, you will feel that something extremely sweet and at the same time extremely strong is awakening in you. Soon you will feel as if a bright nectar were welling in your heart and flowing everywhere in your body. The whole of you will feel perpetually blessed and everything you lay your hands on will appear to you as if it were receiving blessedness. What awakens in you is—to use Sri Aurobindo's phrase—"the psychic being", the true soul in you. This soul is a part of the Divine and has come with its spark of divinity into the substance of matter to lead through birth after birth the evolution of life and mind in a material form. It is this soul that links us to the Divine dwelling within ourselves. And I may tell you that to experience the true psyche in us is not only sheer bliss but a bliss that is self-existent, independent of object, circumstance or person. That is because it comes from the Divine Ananda that is infinite Existence and Consciousness. Once the true psyche has been touched, we lose the taste for other enjoyments. All other enjoyments become dust and ashes. Owing to our habitual attachments we may still go in for them, but now we know their absolute inferiority.

It would be wonderful to live all the time in the great golden sense of the psyche. If we could do so, we should not have to do anything to convey to people that there is something in spirituality. When Vivekananda was asked how one was to know whether a man had realised God, he answered, "His very face will shine." Then, of course, there would be no need to talk—as I am doing now. The Mother precisely referred to the psychic being—which she called "the Divine incarnate deep within"—when she was questioned how we should show the reality of the Ashram life to visitors who are expected in thousands on the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo next year. She said we should live that reality—and the way to live it is to commune with the psychic being. All else, talking, etc., is useless, she added.

Perhaps the only use of talking is to point to the necessity of going beyond all talk and being the self-expressive light of the soul.

SERVICE-TREE AT THE SAMADHI

CALM thou standest here close by
The Master's deep material trance;
Thine is a silent prayer's cry
That mates with God's all-gracious glance.

Thy adoration ever grows
In emerald richness spreading round,
A pearl-white peace on all bestows
And leads them on to worlds unfound.

True service is thy chosen work,
To God-man's pleasure simply sold,
Not for a moment wouldst thou shirk
Its call in rain, or heat, or cold.

The Golden God thou servest here,
Thou hast the Mother's golden grace,
All gold thou shalt be, Soul sincere!
And shower gold on earth apace.

Upon earth permanently perched,
Thou art high heaven's blessed bird,
That long had been in lustres merged,
Now here to service deeply stirred

Thy shade spreads out a peace profound
Such as the joys of Eden know,
In thee a brother we have found,
Our soul's companion here below.

Thy presence is a benediction,
Thy spirit's urge we too shall catch,
Transform our earth-life's foggy fiction
To Truth sun-clear no thought can match.

Thy wood-embedded being is
A spirit conscious and divine,
Replete with light and love and bliss
Of the One Master, mine and thine!

PUNJALAL

CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT SRI AUROBINDO BETWEEN K. M. MUNSHI AND A. B. PURANI

I

Camp: 2 Windsor Place, New Delhi, Oct. 11, 1949.

My dear Ambubhai,

You will excuse my writing in English. I am doing so partly because it is easier to dictate in this language and partly because it might be possible for you to read it to Sri Aurobindo.

As I, perhaps, wrote to you, for years now I have entertained a desire — ineffective indeed—to contact Sri Aurobindo personally. Since 1940, when in jail I realised that in some moments my efforts to “surrender unto God” resulted in an impact with a new vitality; this desire has taken a more articulate form.

I had already written to Sri Aurobindo, through Dilip Kumar Roy, about the kind of *sādhana* which I have evolved for myself. For years now, I have persistently been conscious of Vyasa leading me, guiding me; sometimes I feel as if He makes me His instrument. No doubt, often when occupied with worldly affairs, I lose sight of Him for days.

In 1944, when I was at Pahlgam in Kashmir, for days I felt that He was with me as a living Presence. Being a hard-boiled person, I doubted whether this experience was real or one of the tricks of my imagination. But the contact with this living Presence not only led me a step forward in my evolution but it was projected into this world of sense in several ways. For instance, the unexpected materialisation of an almost impossible dream of having a Temple of Aryan Culture (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) in Bombay came as a direct result of that contact.

Much as I was devoted to Gandhiji and many things of spiritual value though I learnt at his feet, my spiritual world, of which the Vyasa-Vision was the central pivot, remained a thing apart. My book *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life* which has just come out in a second edition would perhaps—if you are interested—show you how my mind has worked in this sector.

Then suddenly, accidentally, I met Dilip Kumar Roy, in Sri Aurobindo we found a common inspiration and, so to say, we rushed into each other's arms. In my then frame of mind, it looked almost an establishment of fresh contact with Sri Aurobindo. I then wrote some letters to Dilip Kumar Roy asking for guidance and Sri Aurobindo was pleased to give it. I have not those letters with me here. He wrote: (1) that my Vyasa-Vision was not a figment of my imagination and that only my thinking it so was creating a barrier to my further progress, and (2) that in spiri-

tual evolution there are stages when conscious efforts must be suspended in order that one may rise to a higher stage. Since then my wish to have a closer contact with Sri Aurobindo became insistent. But I have an instinctive horror of intermediaries—you will excuse me; perhaps it may be due to vanity; but there it is.

During my stay in Hyderabad, I went through one of my intensive courses of "surrender unto God". I could only go through the trials, both physical and mental, at the time because of my Vyasa-Vision. After I came through my severe illness which followed, I decided just to let myself float effortlessly and go on performing the tasks of the moment, more and more as an 'instrument'. The Vyasa-Vision has however receded as a living Presence but the sense of being *nimuttamātram bhava saavya-sāchin*¹ has persisted. During the last nine months, I have worked intensively on the major problems of constitution-making. For the moment, I feel as if I am waiting for guidance; for something which may broaden the horizon of my self-fulfilment. The question has come to me again and again of late: Is there no greater, fuller use of me—'this instrument'? I have a curious faith that if there is such, I will receive the mandate as I have received more than one during the last ten years.

You talk about Darshan. Darshan stimulates only those whose capacity for acquiring faith is highly sensitive. I know my limitation. I have indicated to you how Sri Aurobindo has had a certain spiritual and intellectual influence over me since my college days and how of late I have welcomed his guidance. Somehow I feel that he could, if he were so inclined, make it easy for me to follow the characteristic path of evolution which I am pursuing; but I know as well that if I came for Darshan as others do and go away without inspiration, it might have an adverse effect on my development. You will thus appreciate my hesitation in coming to Pondicherry on the usual days for Darshan.

You do not know how acutely I feel the need for guidance or, if I may so call it, a sign. I wait for it more impatiently than I care to confess. Whether it will come at all, I am not sure; whether it will come from Sri Aurobindo or anyone else or at all, I do not know. If the call comes, I will obey; but it must be a call to me with all my limitations; a call which infuses my poor, incomplete self to visualise, to embody and to interpret and, if God gives me energy and years, to reintegrate Aryan Culture for which I live—for which at any rate, I think I live.

And today Sri Aurobindo is the greatest exponent of Aryan Culture. In this conviction I must wait.

I am sorry I have let myself go. This is not written in a sentimental mood, but in so writing I have satisfied the craving of my innermost soul to convey the faith of my life to Sri Aurobindo. I am sure he will understand, if not appreciate, the struggle that I have embarked upon with the impediments which obstruct my progress. If he does not show me some way or if it is not the will of God that he should, I must rest content with doing the best I can in my humble way. If there is one lesson which

¹ "Arrow-shooter with both hands (Arjuna), be thou only the occasion."—*The Gita*. (Editor)

Sri Krishna has taught me, it is: *svadharma mdhanam śreyah*.¹

I am so sorry that I have not been able to keep in touch with the latest Sri Aurobindo literature. I understand from some newspapers that his letters on poetry have been published. You refer to two further volumes of letters and *Savitri*. Please send me all the works of Sri Aurobindo that have been published during the last 3-4 years by V.P.P. If, as on the last occasion, Sri Aurobindo is pleased to sign his name, I shall feel obliged.

My respects to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Best regards to Naginkaka. Has Dilip returned?

Yours sincerely,
K. M. Munshi

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 22nd November, 1949.

My dear Kanubhai,

I am sure you will be happy to know that your letter was read out to Sri Aurobindo. As you already know, he did remember your experience—the feeling of the presence of Vyasa—which you have recapitulated in this letter. I hope that his help has already reached you and perhaps you are already on the way to the solution of your inner *impasse*.

I went through some portion of the exposition of the Gita sent by you. It is an intellectual attempt and, as you correctly put it in your introduction, it has no validity of spiritual experience. There are, consequently, many metaphysical statements for which one would ask more reasoning than is found in the book. The attempts at Sadhana are sincere and as such would evoke emulation on the part of young men.

Well, I do not want to add anything more to what I wrote in my last letter about Darshan, since you have already a formed notion about what it would or would not be, and even its possible influence, good or adverse, on you.

I add here only two or three points which seem to me to be relevant to some of the ideas in your letter:

(1) Swadharma is really the expression of Swabhava. One should therefore know one's Swabhava—one's nature—before one can express it in one's Dharma. Swabhava is not identical with Prakriti, the ego-centric nature of man. "Swabhava is the Becoming of the self." It means the ideal mould of nature in which the free, divine spirit chooses to cast its manifestation. Swabhava therefore indicates in one sense the original and in another sense the ultimate mould of nature in which the Spirit expresses itself.

For instance, the Swabhava of Arjuna was that of a Kshatriya; his nature-mould was that of a hero, a fighter for great causes. His Swadharma, therefore, lay in fighting

¹ "Better to die following swadharma [=the law of one's own nature]."—*The Gita*. (Editor)

the battle according to the Aryan Code. But due to a nervous shrinking from the act of killing, due to attachment to his "own people", "Swajana", he wanted to adopt the Dharma of the Brahmin and the ascetic. Sri Krishna told Arjuna that his line of evolution and fulfilment lay in following his Swabhava and carrying out the action directed by Swadharma. Arjuna could aspire to divine help in overcoming the difficulties of his own ordinary Prakriti (nature) which came in the way of his Swabhava. But he could not logically implore his Guru's help while retaining the impurities and imperfections of his nature. He would be accepted by Sri Krishna "with all his limitations" only if he were prepared to throw away the false sense of pity and the attachment which would come in the way of his own Dharma.

My point is that being faithful to the *ideal* and *ultimate mould* of one's own nature is certainly required. Only, it would not mean compromise with the imperfections of one's Prakriti (nature). That is at least how I understand—that for Arjuna to be faithful to his ideal mould of a Kshatriya is better than following another mould of nature which may attract him and even seem easier and better than the one in which his nature is cast. His own nature-mould may present him with difficulties. It only means that his course of evolution lies in overcoming those difficulties and not in avoiding them and accepting another Dharma-mould of nature (Swabhava) which might look easier and even be better than his own.

(2) You write that Sri Aurobindo today is the greatest exponent of Aryan Culture. I know that you pay him the highest respect when you say so. I would go a little further, if I may, and say that Sri Aurobindo is not merely "an exponent" (which even a Radhakrishnan and Nehru and perhaps many others are in their own way), he is to me the highest embodiment of Aryan Culture. In fact, in a meeting at Lingaraja College of Belgaum I told the audience that when I was trying to find somebody in our past to whom I could compare Sri Aurobindo I could think of only two personalities: Sri Krishna and Veda-Vyasa. When I think of the grand synthesis of human culture which he has effected with Herculean labour I cannot bring to my mind anybody less than Vyasa in the field of knowledge and Sri Krishna in the field of embodying the Divine Consciousness. In *The Life Divine* he has not only synthesised all human thought up to date but has added his own coping-stone to it. In *The Human Cycle* he has analysed the factors of social development and laid bare the foundations and indicated the line of future evolution and of rebuilding the collective life. In *The Ideal of Human Unity* he has laid bare the political currents and powers and constitutions of humanity and indicated the lines along which alone humanity can attain its political-international unification. He has in *The Future Poetry* traced the course of poetical expression, and laid down by his own experience the psychological basis of a new poetical creation. He has given us the grand poem *Savitri* which promises to be the epic of the age. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* he has revealed the psychological process which would free the present mankind from the need of accepting any Shastra and yet keep open the path of higher evolution for those who want to try it!

A Defence of Indian Culture lays down for the present and the future India the basis of rebuilding our national life on solid foundations. Unostentatious, he has shirked the limelight and has only bothered the general public when his inner voice demanded it. Let me confess to you in this personal letter how deeply I feel the injustice which we, his own countrymen, have been doing to him. But the Light is there and one day the world is bound to see.

(3) A word about intermediaries. Please remember and note that all who have a relation with Sri Aurobindo have a direct relation. There is no one who serves as an intermediary. Whatever communication is addressed to Sri Aurobindo invariably reaches him so that one's relation with Sri Aurobindo is direct and personal. No one is necessary to act as an intermediary.

I will close this rather long letter with two quotations from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which I hope will give you food for thought and may be helpful in your present condition:

"For truth of the Spirit has not to be merely thought but to be lived, and to live it demands a unified single-mindedness of the being; so great a change as is contemplated by the Yoga is not to be effected by a divided will or by a small portion of the energy or by a hesitating mind. He who seeks the Divine must consecrate himself to God and to God only." (p.22)

"But if we desire to make the most of the opportunity that this life gives us, if we wish to respond adequately to the call we have received and to attend to the goal we have glimpsed, not merely advance a little towards it, it is essential that there should be an entire self-giving. The secret of success in Yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the whole of life." (p. 24)

Yours sincerely,
A. B. Purani

A Letter for Sri Aurobindo through A. B. Purani

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi, June 1, 1950.

My dear Gurudev,

I am venturing to address you this letter directly though so far I always wrote to you through Dilip Kumar Roy or Ambubhai Purani. I am doing it in all humility, for you have been an inspiring influence all my life and, after Gandhiji's death, the only person whom I love to look up to with reverence.

I am sending you this letter when I am embarking upon the crucial test of my life.

For over two years now I have reconciled myself to the will of God which I thought indicated that I would not have an opportunity to serve the Motherland as a member of the Central Government. I was disappointed but not unhappy, for, if

it was God's will, there was an end of it. Unexpectedly Panditji's call came when I was at New York where I was spending my holiday. I immediately responded to the call and am now given a very very difficult portfolio : Food and Agriculture.

I feel that God is trying me. I had the same feeling when I went to Hyderabad as Agent General and, if I succeeded there, it was only because of Him.

I have decided to exert myself to the utmost. If I succeed, India will come out of the Food Crisis; if I die during my duty I shall have left a tradition behind.

I have not been able to convert my spiritual aspirations into any concrete achievement. I am too much of the earth and have no right to a closer communion with you. But I do seek some inspiration from you and your blessings if you would give them.

Time and again I made attempts to come to Pondicherry and pay my respects to you. Once I almost started from Bangalore but with a life in which every day has got some toll or duty, it was not possible. Perhaps in July I may come to Madras and it might be possible for me to come to Pondicherry. But in the meantime I can only send my Pranams to you and Mother.

Yours, with reverence

K. M. Munshi

4

My dear Kanubhai,

Your letter of the 1st June to hand.

Sri Aurobindo directs me to write to you that you have his blessings in the task before you and that, as he is not writing letters and replying to them personally, he is asking me to write to you on his behalf.

Yours sincerely,

A. B. Purani

P.S.

I read your letter in the presence of Sri Aurobindo and then I read it to the Mother. She has given me a flower to be sent to you as a token of their blessings, which I include in this letter.

A. B. P

5

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi, 22nd June 1950.

My dear Ambubhai,

Many thanks for your letter of the 8th of June. Thanks for the flower. I am coming to Madras by plane from Bombay on the 6th July and staying there till the morning of the 10th when I shall return to Delhi. On the 9th I am coming to Pondicherry

by car to perform a pilgrimage to the Ashram which I had proposed to myself for years. I will be returning the same evening to Madras.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. Munshi

6

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 27-6-1950.

My dear Kanubhai,

Your letter of the 22-6-50 duly to hand.

I am so glad that you are able to come at last. Did I not ask you in one of my previous letters about your being included in the Central Cabinet? It is something to be given so great a task. I am therefore doubly glad about your coming now because it may mean so much for the country. To live at the present time, so important in the world's history and when so great a spiritual Light as the Master is with us, is itself a great fortune. But to know such a Light, to recognise him and to come in his contact, and avail oneself of his help is something very significant for our life.

I may let you know that the Mother has made arrangement for your stay at Golconde—the Ashram guest house.

In order not to inconvenience you I would like to know if you want any special food or tea arrangements which I can make for you here. In fact I want to make your stay as comfortable and as profitable as possible. And as you have a strenuous time ahead the bodily needs can be so met as to cause you the least inconvenience. I know there will be no lack of energy in the task you have to face. The blessings you have are an inexhaustible Source of Energy.

Hoping to meet you soon,
Yours sincerely,
A. B. Purani

7

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi, June 29, 1950.

My dear Purani,

Many thanks for your letter of the 27th June 1950.

I am much obliged to the Mother for kindly making arrangements for my stay at Golconde. I am, you know, a vegetarian, and do not take chillies, pepper or oil in any shape or form. Otherwise there is nothing special that I need.

I am proposing to leave Madras by car at about 6 a.m. and shall reach Pondicherry at about 9 or 9.30 on the 9th July. Is Dilip Kumar Roy there? Please give him my best compliments.

Hoping to meet you all there, with kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K. M. Munshi

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi, July 26, 1950.

My dear Ambubhai,

Leaving Pondicherry, I was so engulfed in office work that I had no occasion to thank you for your kindness and hospitality. I am sending you herewith a letter for Gurudev which please hand over to him. I am sending it open and if he sends any message, please send it to me. Would you also please convey my best respects to the Mother for her hospitality and kindness? The flower which you gave me, I have handed over to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

K. M. Munshi

P.S.

You must have read my reference to Gurudev published in the *Hindu*.

A Letter to Sri Aurobindo through A. B. Purani

1, Queen Victoria Road, New Delhi, July 30, 1950.

Shri Gurudev,

I apologise for not being able to write to you earlier expressing my deep thanks for the privilege which you accorded to me by giving me an interview. It was an inspiring experience and your presence has brought me a new vision of Life's mission.

I mentioned to you two matters in respect of which I sought your advice. I restate them lest I should have not made them clear to you. I have reached a certain stage of evolution. As I wrote to you three years ago, the Divine Consciousness in the shape of a vision of Vyasa makes me its instrument sometimes. It does not become explicit, according to you, because my rationalistic mind often thinks it is imagination, not reality. Of late the Vyasa-vision does not come so often mainly because I remain so intensely occupied with different activities that no time is left for gathering the threads of suprasensual experience. At the same time the intense pursuit of activities for their own sake has transmuted for a little extent the earthly elements in me, my attachment to ambition and money, wrath and fear, and strengthened my attempt at surrender to God, Ishwara Pranidhan. I had that knowledge when in Hyderabad I was surrounded by circumstances which threatened my life at many moments.

In accepting Panditji's invitation to become a Food Minister, I felt that it was God's will. In that spirit alone I have been working. You promised me three years ago that you would guide me. Though there has been no direct communication, I feel coming closer and when accident brought me to Pondicherry I felt that there was

something of God's will even in the Darshan I had of you.

I would like to have your guidance also as regards the future of Sanatana Dharma. Starting from your Uttara Speech which has been a sort of beacon light to me for years, I have been working for the re-integration of Hindu Culture. I have spoken and written about it extensively. Many have come to look upon me as a kind of missionary of re-integrated Indian Culture. But I am neither learned nor profound as a thinker. I can only contribute my faith and the little energy which has been vouchsafed to me. I only pray that strength be given to me to carry forward the message of seers of whom, in my opinion, you are the only surviving Apostle. What shall I do now?

I want very much to come closer to you, in order that I may receive the inspiration which may enable me to re-integrate our ancient culture. I wonder whether that aspiration will be fulfilled.

Out of the two other topics which we discussed, the substance of your views relating to Pondicherry I have conveyed to our Prime Minister.

In all humility, I remain,

Yours obediently,

K. M. Munshi

10

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 3rd August, 1950.

My dear Kanubhai,

In reply to your letter to him of July 30th 1950 Sri Aurobindo has asked me to write to you the following:

"Your feeling that there should be re-integration of Indian Culture under modern conditions is quite right. It is *the* work that has to be done. And as far as Sri Aurobindo can see at present, Indian Spiritual Culture has a great and bright future before it. It is the future power that can dominate the world.

"So, your efforts in carrying out that work are quite in the right direction, and in carrying out that work you would have his full support and blessings."

I am sure you will find this reply most encouraging.

I was anxiously awaiting your letter though I knew that you would be taken up by the whirlwind of activity when you went out. One has, even then, to find time and leisure, if one can so call it, for things that ultimately matter. The source has to be there, it has to be tapped to keep the stream running—running in the right direction and carrying life-giving waters.

All of us were pleasantly surprised to read your convocation address as reported by the *Hindu*. In it you did strike the right note and you also succeeded in conveying to the outside public the correct impression about Sri Aurobindo. Your language rose to the occasion. We had a talk with Sri Aurobindo and I can confide it to you that he appreciated your speech, as a contribution to "the work that has to be done",

I know you are not merely formal when you convey your thanks to some of us. But is it really necessary when we form parts of one Great Work to be done? We are all happy to see the inspiration you received from the great work and we all look forward to you carrying it out under the guidance of the Light and the unfailing blessings.

It is a great mission that has been laid on Mother India and it is a mission imposed by Him who wants to make Mother India the channel for His work. Let us be sincere and devoted, selfless and desireless and let the *Will* work. For, then we shall be His worthy instruments. What can be more glorious than that He should manifest on earth?

Please convey my best wishes to Sardar Patel—I much better like his old name Vallabhbhai—when you meet him.

Please convey my best wishes to Lilavati, and blessings to your children.

Yours sincerely,

A. B. PURANI

WHEN I INTURN

WHEN I a corner inturn from thought's trafficking
Descends a high caress upon my brow
Great light-diamonds soft in my pool are thrown
The sheath and shell are joyously tinted now.

Irradiance, delight the further ripple out
Sumptuous the silence of my light-brimmed skies
Melting flower that through the time-veil burns
A beauty benign that neither stings nor dies.

A sitar's supple yearning in a bending note
Hollows in me a point of infinite size
In my simple spine there strikes a richer chord
Through a lifting gate of light a shadow dies.

STANLEY W. COWIE

EDUCATION IN INDIA

ITS MEANING AND AIM

(Continued from the issue of September 1971)

Ancient Indian Education: A Summary View

SRI Aurobindo points to an epoch of ancient India when “her thoughts flashed out over Asia and created civilisations; her sons were the bearers of light to the peoples; philosophies based themselves on stray fragments of her infinite wisdom; sciences arose from the waste of her intellectual production .”¹ What was the secret, he asks, “of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force which we see pulsating in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievement, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure? What supported the heroism and self-abandonment of the Kshatriya, the Sikh and the Rajput, the unconquerable national vitality and endurance? What was it that stood behind that civilisation second to none, in the massiveness of its outlines or the perfection of its details? Without a great and unique discipline involving a perfect education of soul and mind, a result so immense and persistent would have been impossible....”²

If Indian education of the future is to fulfil the promise of the past, it should be worthwhile looking for the principles and aims that governed it in its best periods.

Ancient India, contrary to all accepted notions, took a perfectly “scientific” view of the problem: it based its educational systems on the psychology and physiology of man, a psychology that was, in the literal sense of the word, the science of the soul, and a physiology that was aware of the deepest secrets of man’s well-being. “India has seen always in man the individual, a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth....”³ She was aware that “the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to

¹ Bandemataram, 9.4.198, “The Asiatic Role”.

² Karmayogin, “The Brain of India”.

³ Arya, 1920, “A Preface on National Education”.

develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and practical capacities,...that the true secret...is to help him to find his deepest self, the real psychic entity within.... That if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as 'the leader of the march set in our front'*; it will take up most of the business of education out of our hands...."¹ The physiology that assisted the process was the science of preserving the vital fluids, the *retas*, that provided the soundest physical base for the play of all energies, physical, vital, mental and spiritual in the human being. This was the rationale of that famous discipline of Brahmacharya that could produce a Kalidasa "accomplishing the highest in every line of poetic creation, ..paralleled by the accomplishment in philosophy of Shankara in a short life of thirty-two years, and dwarfed by the universal mastery of all possible spiritual knowledge and experience of Sri Ramakrishna in our own era."²

Ancient Indian education seems to have passed through at least three well-marked phases.³ In the earliest, the Vedic and Upanishadic period, the main emphasis was on spiritual knowledge and experience, the *parā vidyā*, although the *aparā vidyā*, mundane knowledge, was by no means neglected as we can readily see from the long list of subjects already known to the spiritual aspirant in the Chhandogya Upanishad. In the time of the Great Epics, and later when Kalidasa wrote, the emphasis seems to have shifted to mundane knowledge, the subjects were many and covered a wide field, there was a degree of specialisation, women had a fair share of training, at least among the rich aristocratic and the hetaira classes, and a regular code of student discipline had grown up and was strictly enforced. Later came the great Buddhist universities, at Nalanda and elsewhere, which concentrated on philosophy, were more or less like the schools of medieval Europe at Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge. They were the forerunners of that "academism" which remained a marked feature of the Indian system till the opening of modern schools and universities; its special virtue lay in the preservation of the ancient lore, especially in scripture, law, medicine, literature, grammar and philosophy, with little originality or free thinking. The organisation, except in the Buddhist universities which were known as *vihāra* or residential quarters for monks, was almost throughout, barring the case of women who were usually taught at home, based on the *guru-gṛha* system, a teacher taking in residence a very small number of boys in their teens and early youth, on a paying-guest basis, the payment being made either in cash or by way of personal service, followed at the end of the course by a gift from the pupil in cash or kind, *guru-dakṣiṇā*, according to his ability or status.

There were obvious *lacunae* in this ancient Indian system. It was, even in the best periods, restricted to a comparatively small number; the idea of universal education is a modern discovery. There was a distinct element of "class" in the type of

* This is a Vedic phrase (S.K.B.).

¹ *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 3.

² *Karmayogin*, "The Brain of India".

³ Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Second Series, pp. 140-1.

education given; the Brahmin, for instance, and the Kshatriya prince worked on very different lines. Vocational training for the artisan crafts was almost entirely in the hands of the master craftsmen, with little if any general background of culture. The mass of the peasantry remained illiterate and were given little encouragement or opportunity to improve their techniques. Women's education was, apart from what they might learn in their parents' or husbands' homes, not at all systematic, although the traditional "sixty-four arts" — these included trivialities like weaving garlands and making beds as well as the highly technical intricacies of dancing and music — which they were supposed to master were formidable enough; perhaps they were not for all. The moral training provided in the *guru-grha* was somewhat similar to that obtainable in the "Houses" of the modern English-type public schools; but it did not prevent then, as it does not prevent now, a certain amount of open or clandestine immorality, once out of the prying vigilance of the master; it certainly made possible the ever-growing hedonistic laxity of the classical and post-classical periods of Indian history. As to the kind of physical training provided, we have very little knowledge; there is no evidence of any kind of systematic training, except in the special schools for princes who were taught to be proficient in all the manly sports. As to spiritual training, due to a growing cleavage between the "secular" and the "religious" in the periods following the Upanishadic age, no provision was made outside the specifically "yogic" institutions; these were restricted to a very limited number and may not have included many young pupils. The intellectual training provided in the schools was certainly of a very high order, the tests were severe, and freedom of discussion was a constant feature, except perhaps during the centuries of decline. But the Indian system, like the Chinese, came to be confined within narrow limits, there grew up a contempt for all "foreign" knowledge; an 18th century prince, Serajuddaula, could come to believe that a European nation like the English could not possibly put in the field more than ten thousand soldiers with equipment hardly matching his. And it must be confessed, the State in ancient or medieval India did little to promote education, except through occasional endowments (as in the case of the Buddhist universities), or through erratic schemes of patronage based on personal predilections of the monarch or feudatory chief; flattery played an eminent role here.

This being a rough impartial estimate of the Indian achievement in education before the modern age — and we have already seen something of what stands to the credit of our British masters — it remains to be seen how much of it is to be taken over either in principle or in detail for the purposes of our future.

What is Education?

But, first we must be clear as to what exactly we are to understand by "education". This is a moot point on which learned men and at least half a dozen Education Commissions have widely differed. We propose here to confine ourselves to the views expressed by Sri Aurobindo.

It is obvious that the idea of what education should mean has varied from time to time. "Formerly, education was merely the forcing of the child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideals or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents...."¹ Let us not jump to the conclusion that we have overpassed that stage. On the contrary, this "compulsory shaping" of the child's thoughts and character into the moulds fixed, not indeed by the ideals or interests of the parents, but by that huge monstrosity, the State, has now been accepted as the thing most desirable and necessary in some of the "advanced" countries of the world today. For it has been seen "how all-important is the thought in shaping the life," and the State machine has already taken "hold of that too by forming the thought of the individual through State education and by training him to the acceptance of the approved communal, ethical, social, cultural, religious ideas, as was done in many ancient forms of education."²

In the liberal tradition of the more democratic countries, there has been an attempt to rationalise human society through a more enlightened system of education. "But a rational education means necessarily three things: first, to teach men how to observe and know rightly the facts on which they have to form a judgment, secondly, to train them to think fruitfully and soundly, thirdly, to fit them to use their knowledge and their thought effectively for their own and the common good.... Unfortunately,...the actual education given in the most advanced countries has not had the least relation to these necessities."³ This has led "many superior minds to deny the efficacy of education itself and its power to transform the human mind."⁴

It is interesting to examine the reasons for the failure. In the first place, the demands made by this ideal form of rational education are difficult in the extreme, and it is doubtful if the "training made available to the millions can ever be of this rare character."⁵ Secondly, "education and intellectual training by itself...only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego."⁶ But the root cause of failure lies in the inadequacy of the concept of education itself. Unless there is a radical change in this regard, education does not serve its purpose. "The idea of education is still primarily that of intelligence and mental capacity and knowledge of the world and things, but secondarily also of moral training, and though as yet very imperfectly, of the development of the aesthetic faculties. The intelligent

¹ *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 3.

² *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Chapter 27.

³ *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *The Life Divine*, Book Two, Chapter 28.

thinking being, moralised, controlling his instincts and emotions by his will and his reason, acquainted with all that he should know of the world and his past, capable of organising intelligently by that knowledge his social and economic life, ordering rightly his bodily habits and physical being, this is the conception that now governs civilised humanity."¹ This is a return, in a more or less modified form, to the old Hellenic ideal of a sound mind in a sound body. Both these ideals, the Hellenic and the modern, "take it that man is partly a mental, partly a physical being, with the mentalised physical life for his field and reason for his highest attribute and his highest possibility."² But reason is not the highest attribute of man nor the limit of his possibility. And reason by itself is powerless to transform the race, change the little human ego into the true individual who alone can find a lasting solution to its age-old problems.

To get at this true individual, the deepest soul hidden within man and veiled by his normal mental, vital and physical activities, and to make it truly effective in his outer as well as his inner life must then be the real meaning of education, an "evocation" or bringing out of all his hidden potentialities. We are thus "led back to a still more ancient truth and ideal that overtops both the Hellenic and the modern levels. For we shall then seize the truth that man is a developing spirit trying here to find and fulfil itself in the forms of mind, life and body; and we shall perceive luminously growing before us the greater ideal of a deeply conscious, self-illumined, self-possessing, self-mastering soul in a pure and perfect mind and body."³

This was the highest ideal of ancient Indian education. To this we must stick.

Our Aims

Education in the India of the future must be national as well as nation-building. It will be national in so far as it keeps faithfully to the best traditions of the land. It has at the same time to so formulate its aims and devise its methods as to help best towards the fulfilment of its high destiny. The aims must be considered first.

Sri Aurobindo has formulated the aims succinctly in these terms: "It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its *dharma*, and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being."⁴

But immediately one speaks of the soul and its growth, one is led to ideas of an ascetic spirituality that has little to do with mundane interests. The reason is not far

¹ *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 13.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Arya*, *loc. cit.*

to seek. For, "in India for the last thousand years and more, the spiritual life and the material have existed side by side to the exclusion of the progressive mind. Spirituality has made terms for itself with Matter by renouncing the attempt at general progress... The material life, handed over to the Ignorance, the purposeless and endless duality, became a leaden and dolorous yoke from which flight was the only escape."¹

This was most unfortunate. For, the spiritual ideal does not mean "the exclusion of anything whatsoever from our scope, of any of the great aims of human life.... Spirit without mind, spirit without body is not the type of man, therefore a human spirituality must not belittle the mind, life or body or hold them of small account ... But still there is a great difference between the spiritual and the purely material and mental view of existence. The spiritual view holds that the mind, life, body are man's means and not his aims...; it sees them as his outer instrumental self and not his whole being.... It sees a greater reality than the apparent not only behind man and the world, but within man and the world, and this soul, self, divine thing in man it holds to be that... which man has ever to try to see and recognise through all appearances, to unite his thought and life with it and in it to find his unity with his fellows."²

How does this spiritual aim in life and education, and all life is a perpetual process of education, — how does this search for the hidden Reality in man and things fit in with our need for perfecting the outer instruments? For without that aim of perfection we lose all sense in our attempt to educate ourselves. To this Sri Aurobindo has given categoric answers.

"We aim at the health and vigour of the body; but with what object? For its own sake, will be the ordinary reply...or else that we may have long life and a sound basis for our intellectual, vital, emotional satisfaction. Yes, for its own sake, in a way, but in this sense that... the body too is our means for fulfilling... the Godward law of our being. The mental, the emotional, the aesthetic parts of us have to be developed ... because these things too are the expressions of the spirit, things which are seeking... for their divine values. . Ethics in the spiritual point of view... is a means of developing in our action and still more essentially in the character of our being the diviner self in us.... So with all our aims and activities; spirituality takes them all and gives them a greater, diviner, more intimate sense."³

This, in other words, means that nothing whatever shall be alien to the purpose of education. Philosophy, Science, Art, Poetry, Politics, Society, Economy will all be included in its scope, each pursued with one single aim in view, namely, "the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man.... As it was to some extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be... with all education. It would embrace all knowledge in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but this

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Introduction, Chapter 3.

² *The Renaissance in India*, Chapter 4.

³ *Ibid.*

self-developing and self-finding.”¹

This, it may be objected, is all from the point of view of the individual, and so far as it can be achieved, it is certainly a high ideal and aim. But there is also the national aspect of the question, and the international. How do we fit our aims to these wider objectives? The first answer is that a nation derives its value from the individuals who compose it. The second and more important point that is often apt to be ignored is that a nation cannot be made, it can only be made to grow from within, by throwing into it helpful influences. Education can be turned into one of the most powerful of those influences, “so as to build up men and not machines—national men, able men, men fit to carve out a career for themselves by their own brain power and resource, fit to meet the shocks of life and breast the waves of adventure. So shall the Indian people cease to sleep and become once more a people of heroes, patriots, originators, so shall it become a nation and no longer a disorganised mass of men....”² In other words, although we cannot define national education in one or two sentences, “we may describe it tentatively as the education which, starting with the past and making full use of the present, builds up a great nation. Whoever wishes to cut off the nation from its past is no friend of our national growth. Whoever fails to take advantage of the present is losing us the battle of life. We must therefore save for India all that she has stored up of knowledge, character and noble thought in her immemorial past. We must acquire for her the best knowledge that Europe can give her and assimilate it to her own peculiar type of national temperament, we must introduce the best methods of teaching humanity has developed, whether modern or ancient...”³

Lastly, there is the field of international relations, in which India is destined to play a mighty role in the future. “For she stands already as a considerable international figure and this will grow as time goes on, into vast proportions; she is likely in time to take her place as one of the preponderant states whose voices will be strongest and their lead and their action determinative of the world’s future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and force of character is of the first order.”⁴

How to meet these difficult demands is the problem we have next to consider.

(To be concluded)

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 23.

² *Bandematararam*, 1908, “A National University.”

³ *Karmayogin*, 1.3.1908, “A National University.”

⁴ Sri Aurobindo’s *Message to the Andhra University*, 1948.

TOWARDS AUROVILLE

AN APPROACH THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S BOOK "THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY"

(Continued from the issue of October 1971)

THE goals of the Greek ideal of democracy were primarily the providing of an effective and personal share to each citizen in the actual government, legislation and administration of the community and a greater freedom of individual temperament and action. In modern democracies neither of these characteristics can flourish, for in the governing of large States, the personal share of each citizen is mostly ineffective. Against the massive brute power of the huge mechanism of the modern State the individual feels totally helpless. And "when he feels its pressure grinding him into its uniform moulds, he has no resource except either an impotent anarchism or else a retreat, still to some extent possible, into the freedom of his soul or the freedom of his intellectual being." ³¹ The World-State, to stop destruction at its roots or avoid its own subversion, might as well extend its principle of regulation to the mental, emotional and the physical life of man by the communal mind, which is only the mediocre mass mind, resulting in the total obliteration of free thought and activity. "A static order of society would be the necessary consequence, since without the freedom of the individual a society cannot remain progressive. It must settle into the rut or the groove of a regulated perfection or of something to which it gives that name because of the rationality of system and symmetrical idea of order which it embodies. The communal mass is always conservative and static in its consciousness and only moves slowly in the tardy process of subconscious Nature. The free individual is the conscious progressive: it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible." ³²

Unity is at the very basis of all existence which the evolving spirit in Nature steadily realises through diversity and complexity on the surface. In fact life exists by diversity; that is why every individual, every group however similar to the others are by some principle of variation unique. But uniformity and artificial regulation is not the law of life. A perfect order comes from within; it is the outflowering of inner nature. "Therefore the truest order is that which is founded on the greatest possible liberty; for liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding. Nature secures variation by division into groups and insists on liberty by the force of individuality in the members of the group. Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings again must be the natural

association of free individuals.”³³ It is towards such a free union of peoples that our conscious efforts must be directed. The necessity of natural groupings can be seen in Nature in its insistence on the diversity of language. Diversity of language helps the human spirit both in unification and in variation, for a language brings those who speak it into ‘a certain large unity of growing thought, formed temperament and ripening spirit’. “It is an intellectual, aesthetic and expressive bond which tempers division where division exists and strengthens unity where unity has been achieved.”³⁴ It has given self-consciousness to racial and national unity and created the bond of a common self-expression. Also it has been a means of a helpful and fruitful national differentiation. “For each language is the sign and power of the soul of the people which naturally speaks it. Each develops therefore its own peculiar spirit, thought-temperament, way of dealing with life and knowledge and experience. If it receives and welcomes the thought, the life-experience, the spiritual impact of other nations, still it transforms them into something new of its own and by that power of transmutation it enriches the life of humanity with its fruitful borrowings and does not merely repeat what had been gained elsewhere. Therefore it is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language, cannot live its whole life or its real life. And this advantage to the national life is at the same time an advantage to the general life of the human race.”³⁵ Each language is instrumental in developing a special character, a different temperament and a new personality, and helps a people to create and perfect a central intellectual aesthetic, spiritual life of their own with its distinct use and importance for mankind.

A common language certainly makes for unity but only when it becomes the natural expression of the peoples of the world by a long adaptation and development from within. For a language is a complete instrument of national culture; it is the expression of its higher life and thought. “Diversity of language is worth keeping because diversity of cultures and differentiation of soul-groups are worth keeping and because without that diversity life cannot have full play; for in its absence there is a danger, almost an inevitability of decline and stagnation.”³⁶ If national variation disappears into a single uniform human unity, then in spite of its gains of political peace, economic stability and perfect administration, eventually it is bound to lead to an uncreative sterilisation of the mind and the stagnation of the soul of the whole human race. “The peace, well-being and settled order of the human world is a thing eminently to be desired as a basis for a great world-culture in which all humanity must be united; but neither of these unities, the outward or inward, ought to be devoid of an element even more important than peace, order and well-being, freedom and vigour of life, which can only be assured by variation and by the freedom of the group and of the individual. Not then a uniform unity, not a logically simple, a scientifically rigid, a beautifully neat and mechanical sameness but a living oneness full of healthy freedom and variation is the ideal which we should keep in view and strive to get realised in man’s future.”³⁷

If excessive uniformity and centralisation tend to the disappearance of variations and liberties, a strong group-individualism and diversity prevent human unity. In a world-nation all diversity disappears giving place to the sole unity of the race turning the many nations of today into convenient administrative units or mere geographical provinces. Such a mechanised world-body might as well sow the seeds of its stagnation, disintegration, and finally collapse. The only way to achieve unity in diversity and avoid the cruel cycle of creation and destruction, realisation and relapse is to strive towards a free, elastic and progressive world-union. If this has to be achieved, then the analogy of the evolution of the nation-state has to be avoided and the natural tendency towards unification by political, economic and administrative means discouraged and discarded altogether. Simultaneously we must encourage only those forces of idealistic nationalism which can further the interests of an international unification. The principle of self-determination and the substitution of war and force by free agreement and an agreed principle of common action between various nations of the world will make the world ready for this ideal of human unity. "A free world-union must in its very nature be a complex unity based on a diversity and that diversity must be based on free self-determination."³⁸ For a mechanical system of unification always tends to efface the creative national spirit altogether. As such the peoples of the world must be encouraged to group themselves according to their free-will and their natural affinities. "Unity would be the largest principle of life, but freedom would be its foundation-stone."³⁹ A system of grouping based on political and commercial interests has its own serious disadvantages. Similarly exigencies of administrative control and defence have their limitations. For every people will not equally have a free voice and effective status in a union of the race built on political, commercial, military or administrative basis. Of course, the removal of war, the recognition of the right of self-determination and the furtherance of economic interests by mutual and common agreement are the *sine qua non* of a free union. There remain then the aspects of the intellectual, cultural and spiritual growth of the different peoples in a free world-union. A profound sense of living unity must increasingly become the overriding psychological occupation of conscious souls all over the world resulting in free and friendly interchange, closer understanding and a certain unity and correlation of effort in the united human advance. "For the final end is a common world-culture in which each national culture should be, not merged into or fused with some other culture differing from it in principle or temperament, but evolved to its full power and could then profit to that end by all the others as well as give its gains and influences to them, all serving by their separateness and their interaction the common aim and idea of human perfection."⁴⁰ A world wherein peace and freedom are secure might freely devote itself to the creative fulfilment of the human spirit by the full encouragement and flowering of the individual, community and the nation within the framework of a united mankind.

The skill, energies and prayers of the leaders of evolution must then be directed to the perfection of this framework. The idea of a world-parliament, though attrac-

tive at first sight, would not be a proper instrument of a free world-union; it could at best be the vehicle of a unitarian world-state. A world-federation too would be inappropriate to the ideal of infinite diversity and freedom which the world-union seems to hold as its chief principle. The growth of the living idea of the essential oneness of mankind, or the realisation of the spiritual unity of the human race, can certainly bring about the desired change and help people to evolve the necessary framework for a world-union.

(To be continued)

Compiled by MADHUSUDAN REDDI

⁸¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1960).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

GLIMPSES OF HISTORICAL PONDICHERRY

I

PONDICHERRY in south India to day assumes a very special importance because of the presence of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which draws people from the world over; and most visitors know very little about the town proper which was perhaps predestined to become the city where Sri Aurobindo would found an Ashram since it was the place where Rishi Agastya in ancient times had taught the Vedas.

Pondicherry is not like Bombay at the entrance of a magnificent bay, nor like Calcutta at the mouth of a great river, nor like Delhi on an important trade route.

It has always been difficult here to disembark from a ship, and the surrounding countryside is far from rich; Pondicherry does not seem intended to become a very important harbour nor an industrial city nor an important trade centre. Nevertheless, there lingers in this little town a very special 18th century flavour, which is conveyed by the old buildings, and the streets which are all at right angles.

Pondicherry is also a city of Knowledge and Prayer.

Indeed, from ancient times, Centres of Culture taught Sanskrit and the Vedas. The French also played their part in continuing the work of former times, by opening more schools and educational centres. After the French, the Indian Government improved upon it still further and there are a great number of institutions imparting education at present.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy draw visitors from the whole world, and the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is to be commended for the very special method of teaching adopted. We also have the international city of Auroville, the "City of Dawn", which is an extension of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and where the principle of a life inspired by a sense of the Divine is sought to be applied by people of all countries who are there to work, build and live in perfect harmony thereby giving the place a cosmopolitan character.

We shall now quote the words of the learned archaeologist, the late Professor Jouveau-Dubreuil: ... "Pondicherry has always been a connecting link between Europe and India...." We know that the Romans settled down there about 2000 years ago to trade.

Pondicherry had in those days a natural harbour which unfortunately got silted up and subsequently filled up. This harbour was mentioned in 1700 A.D. in a well-known map published in memory of one of the old governors: Dupleix. There was marked on the map the spot where was located the St. Thomas Redoubt protecting the mouth of the river. At that particular spot was the natural harbour in ancient times. Today, neither the river mouth nor the river is to be seen; the river has found its

way far to the south at Virampatnam, and what was known formerly as the river of Pondicherry is no more; instead today we have the Ariankuppam river about 3 kilometres to the south of Pondicherry.

Formerly the Gingi river wound its way very close to the area called Oopallam, at a place known today as the Sportsground, and flowed into the sea at Kiraypaleam to the south of the present Electricity Department.

One of the old governors of Pondicherry confirms this by stating in his Memoirs: (Vol. II, page 16): "the frigate 'La Dilligente' was in the open sea; it was decided to make the vessel enter the Pondicherry river as the bore (*la barre*) at the river mouth had deepened greatly owing to the heavy monsoons; the frigate therefore entered the river under its own sails.... If the river had remained so, Pondicherry would have been the most important trading post of this coast, and we had never seen the river in such a good condition as in that year."

It is therefore quite obvious that before 1675 Pondicherry had a well-protected natural harbour which was exactly why the Romans, two thousand years ago, were attracted to it.

2

About one thousand nine hundred years ago the Roman vessels cast anchor at Pondicherry. The "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea" which was written in about 60 A.D., and the "Geography of Ptolemy" written in the middle of the second century after Christ, both mention a harbour called "Podukay" on the Coromandel Coast. Podukay was with Camara (today Caveripatnam) and Sopatma (probably Markanam today) one of the three big harbours on the Coromandel Coast which received regularly the visit of Roman sailing vessels. These vessels called "Kolandiophonta" carried goods, particularly Roman wine in amphoras, to India, then Indian goods to China and came back from China with silk. Strabo, the Greek geographer, stated that these vessels travelled in groups of a hundred and twenty and more at a time.

From the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea" and the "Geography of Ptolemy" it is obvious that Pondicherry or rather Podukay enjoyed a great importance in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. Madame Yvonne R. Gaebelé, the learned historian, writes: "...surely two centuries after Christ, and probably many centuries earlier, Podukay was already in existence, and was an important link between Rome and the Far-Eastern countries."

To confirm the correctness of the old writings, we have the accidental discoveries of King Louis XIV's astronomer, Le Gentil, who, while at Pondicherry, was to found an observatory at Ariankuppam in the suburbs of the town. In 1765, during his work, he had the chance of seeing foundations which, according to him, "appeared to belong to some town or important village". He also found, as was re-discovered later by Professor Jouveau-Dubreuil, an ancient statue of Lord Buddha, which proves that Buddhism had spread in ancient times to what is today a remote corner of South India.

Again in 1886, Mr. Jumeau, P.W.D. Engineer, while attending to the building of the bridge over the Ariankuppam river, discovered a fragment of a granite statue, petrified vertebra, pieces of wood which were beginning to get transformed into lignite and specimens of "ancient bricks".

Now, again around 1937, whenever he had some leisure, Jouveau-Dubreuil would go to the Ariankuppam village visiting the ruins of the old palace occupied by a French bishop about 250 years ago, Monseigneur Pigneau de Behaine. In the course of his walks he was lucky to meet the village children who would give him various little articles which they said were to be found by the riverside. A close examination of these articles impelled the Professor to ask the children to bring him all their discoveries, which they did, for a consideration.

Then at about that time there was a most striking coincidence. The owner of the land, where was situated the old palace, dug his property to plant coconut saplings, and at a depth of 2 feet discovered remains of ancient walls made of over-sized bricks, potsherds of an unknown type, glass beads, Roman oboli, etc.

Jouveau-Dubreuil with the help of Mr. Pattabiraman, also an experienced archaeologist, and Father Faucheux dug deeper and were later helped by the Madras Archaeological Department. Their discoveries established that Pondicherry had been an important harbour and that there had been Roman employees and workmen who had carried on glass, pottery and spinning industries. These Romans lived in an "Emporion" or "port, designated in treaties with the local princes, where Roman trade was authorized and subject to customs duty."

The presence of Roman traders living in small colonies in each port is also confirmed by Indian writings. The Silappadikaram (Chant C line 10) states that at Caveripatnam the Roman Establishment was known as: "Yavanar-Yrukka". It is also said: "King Pandian of Madura employed Romans as bodyguards," and further: "the high walls of the fort, well guarded by the Yavanas, or Roman warriors, whose swords sow death among the enemies." We also learn from the same writings: "King Pandian, within his fort, enjoyed not only safety but also good wines. The Yavanis (the Roman ladies) carry the good European bottles, and pour Roman wine in the gold cup of King Pandian."

We may now give a short summary of Pondicherry under the various southern dynasties.

The oldest in the south seems to be the Chalukyan dynasty, founded by Prince Pulakesin. Then the Pallavas became the rulers; with their capital at Conjeeveram. They sailed across the seas, their armies spread to Malaysia, Java, etc.

Further south there was also another kingdom ruled by the Pandyan Kings, with their capital at Madura, which became a great centre of culture.

The most famous was the Chola Empire, which spread from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. The Cholas were also sea-farers; theirs was the greatest Hindu empire in the south, and under them Buddhism which had flourished at an earlier date was slowly absorbed into Hinduism. The Cholas were

great temple-builders, such as those at Mahabalipuram, Tirivicaray, very close to Pondicherry, where were also discovered swords, daggers, and gold jewels belonging probably to Dravidian princes whose remains were found in megalithic graves.

Inscriptions found on a temple at Tirouvandar Kovil close to Pondicherry state that there was a centre of study of Vedas and Sanskrit. Again in 1887, copper plates found at Bahour a few miles away from Pondicherry mention that there existed a Centre of Study or Vidyasthana about 868 A.D. There was another of these at Tirubuvan near Pondicherry, according to the inscriptions on the Varadharaja Perumal temple there.

Here we may mention that the Sage Agastya belongs to a far older period. Rishi Agastya was well-known because he was one of the authors of the Vedas, and brought Aryan civilisation from North India to the South.

As evidence of his presence in Pondicherry we have inscriptions discovered by Father Faucheux in the Pondicherry Cathedral Church. This church is built close to the location of the Vedapuriswara temple. This temple bore inscriptions carrying the name Agastiswara which means Agastya's Iswara or also Siva, deity of the Pondicherry temple adored by Agastya.

This temple had what was called a "Swayambhu Lingam", that is to say a lingam which came into existence by itself and without a human agency.

According to Mr. Gopinatha Rao (*Hindu Iconography*, Vol 2, Part 1, page 81), when a Lingam is "Swayambhu" and was not made by human hands, then it is there from time immemorial.

From the above we believe that Pondicherry is extremely ancient. All ancient Indian cities have generally an old temple often covered with inscriptions, and at the time of Dupleix there was the temple of Vedapuriswara mentioned above. Some inscriptions on the stones of this temple go to show it was very old; fragments of the 10th century have been found; and if such fragments have been found, the temple was probably much older.

Pondicherry is not only a very old city, but also a place of learning. Each time Ananda Rangapillay speaks of this temple which was destroyed in 1748, he calls it Vedapuriswara Temple. Many temples have names including the word Puri which means town. This town is where the said temple is located, and therefore Vedapuriswara of Pondicherry means: "Siva who lives in the temple consecrated to the Vedas." Usually a town consecrated to the Vedas was inhabited by scholars learned in the Vedas.

Before closing the present chapter we may observe that Jouveau-Dubreuil, the archaeologist, was a friend of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and Dubreuil had told him that Rishi Agastya had lived at the very place that was to shelter later the greatest Rishi of all times, Sri Aurobindo.

(To be concluded)

GISELAINE MONNIER

THE PARSIS OF INDIA

AN HISTORICAL RETROSPECT BY P. P. BALSARA ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATIONS FOR CYRUS THE GREAT

With acknowledgements to the popular Gujarati daily of Bombay, Jam-e-Jamshed, we reproduce the following valuable feature of its issue of October 16, 1971. It has an interest for the readers of Mother India not only because a remnant of the race of Cyrus the Great is now an organic part of this country but also because several members of that remnant are disciples of Sri Aurobindo, working either in the Pondicherry Ashram or in the outside world and one of them has been, by the decision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the editor of Mother India for nearly 23 years.

The original introduction, signed E. J. J., to the historical survey ran: "The Indo-Iranian Society of New Delhi, under the patronage of the Shahinshah of Iran and the President of India, organised a Congress of Scholars in that city from 4th to 6th October, 1971, on the occasion of the celebration of 2,500 years of Monarchy in Iran founded by Cyrus the Great. A number of eminent Indologists and Iranologists were invited to participate in the Congress and read papers. Mr. P. P. Balsara's paper, reproduced here, highlights the toleration of the Hindus and some of the good traits of the Parsis as the two main contributing factors for the survival and progress of the Parsis in India during the past more than thirteen centuries."

Who are the Parsis ?

IN the seventh century A.D. when the Arabs conquered Persia, some of the inhabitants of that country who were following Zoroastrianism and did not want to embrace Islam fled to India and they are the forefathers of the Parsis of India. Those Zoroastrian Persians who stayed on in Persia are also known as Parsis, but in Iran (Persia) they are called Zoroastrians.

Small Community with Rich History

Today there are about a hundred thousand Parsis in India, some 6,000 in Pakistan, about 4,000 more in Europe, about 2,000 in North America, Africa and the Far East combined, in addition to nearly 30,000 in Iran. Although the Parsis of In-

dia form the smallest minority community in that country and although their total number throughout the world is not more than a hundred and fifty thousand, they bear an importance far beyond their numbers.

The history of the Parsis before the Arab conquest of Persia occupies a prominent place in the history of the world, and their history after coming to India is equally impressive. Of the former history, Arnold Wilson says, "Over a course infinitely hard, with little experience to guide her, Persia ran her mighty race of old, pausing at times to fight for her life in the pitiless arena. Of those who came before, none ran so far; of those who came after, none ran so nobly."¹ The history of this small community after coming to India equally attracts the attention of historians.

The Parsis belong to the Aryan stock and they lived together as brothers in one place with the Indian Aryans, both having been closely connected by ties of language and religion. Some schism having separated them, they left their common home, the Indian Aryans descending on the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Iranian Aryans settling down in Iran.* Some of those who settled in Iran came by the north-west route and stayed in Media and called themselves the Medes, while the others entered the country from the north-east and settled in Fars in the south-west and called themselves Farsis (Parsis, Persians). After their separation from the Indian Aryans, the Parsis began to follow the religion of Zoroaster who lived somewhere about 6,000 B. C.†

Cyrus the Great Starts the Twenty-five Centuries Old Monarchy in Iran

The recorded history of the Parsis starts from Cyrus the Great of Fars who overthrew the Median empire in 549 B.C. and united all modern Iran under him. The Iranian tribes, so welded by him into a single nation, now became "the foremost

* EDITOR'S NOTE: The learned author seems to take as established a number of hypotheses in his statements here. There has never been any proof, either from archaeology or documentary sources, that there was an invasion of India by the "Aryans" in any computable epoch. The Rigveda, the earliest Indo-Aryan document and often cited in support of the "invasion" theory, nowhere indicates that its composers were in a new country nor does it provide any pointer to the route of entry into India. None of the cultures excavated in the subcontinent bears any typical definitive "Aryan" characteristics. The generally accepted division of the Indian people into foreign "Aryans" and native "Dravidians" has little foundation: the Indian people seems to be a homogeneous race with a variety of sub-races having their own minor distinguishing traits. It is not impossible that in remote antiquity the forefathers of the Indian people hailed from more northern latitudes, as B. G. Tilak argued; but, as far as historical or archaeological knowledge goes, the so-called "Aryan stock" of India has always been in this country.

† EDITOR'S NOTE: This date is the one generally given by the Greeks. But there seems to be no certainty about it. Opinions differ among the scholars. Some opt for as late as the sixth century B.C., while others prefer *circa* 1000 B.C. Perhaps the date depends on the chronology we fix for the Rigveda, since the compositions ascribed to Zoroaster, the Gathas, are in a sister language to the archaic Sanskrit of that scripture. If the modern hypothesis of an "Aryan invasion" round about 1500 B.C. is credited, Zoroaster would not be very far from that time. But if the Rigveda is taken to antedate the Harappa Culture of 2300-1750 B.C. (by the latest radiocarbon calculations), he is likely to fall into the third millennium at the latest and the fourth at the earliest.

people in the world".³ He is referred to in the Bible as "the anointed of the Lord"³ for his liberal policy towards the Jews. "The empire founded by Cyrus the Great was not based on territorial acquisition alone, but also on international toleration and understanding," says the present Shah of Iran.... "Indeed, I see in our first empire something of the spirit of the United Nations of nearly 2,500 years later."⁴ As Sir Percy Sykes says, "the evidence of Holy Writ, of the classical writers, and of the Persians themselves, all tend to show that Cyrus was indeed worthy of the title 'Great'."⁵

Darius the Great

Cyrus was followed by Darius the Great during whose days the Achaemenian empire became "the vastest empire which had ever appeared in Asia and which lasted two centuries."⁶ Egypt was under Iran for nearly a century, and Darius constructed the first Suez Canal in 500 B.C.

The Greeks

The Achaemenians fell to Alexander the Great and the Greeks ruled over Iran for about a hundred years but they could not hellenize Iran; on the contrary they were assimilated by the Iranians.

The Parthians and the Sassanians

The Parthians from north-east Iran then took the place of the Greeks and ruled over Iran for some four hundred years. The Achaemenians were constantly at war with the Greeks; the Parthians and their successors the Sassanians were busy with wars against Rome. Under the Sassanians, Iran regained her past glory and strength, and, with the Roman empire, was one of the two big powers of the time. But after the glorious reign of Khushru the Great internal dissensions and rivalries between the various pretenders to the throne began to show their heads and they exacted their price from that dynasty, which ruled for four centuries.

Though all nations, like all individuals, die sooner or later, they do not die of the same cause. Broadly speaking, ancient Egypt died of inbreeding, ancient Babylon of malaria, and ancient Rome of vice; Carthage perished through war, and both Greece and Iran through internal quarrels. The Parsis of Iran had to leave their country too to save their religion.

Parsis leave Iran

Persecution by the zealous followers of Mahomed⁷ was one of the chief causes that compelled the Parsis to leave Iran, and they went to the west, to China and to India to escape it and to save their religion from extinction. Those who went to the

west and to China were absorbed in the people of those places, but only those who came to India's west coast managed to keep their identity mainly because of their strong desire to do so, and also because of toleration and the rigid caste system of the indigenous Hindus round about.

India not unknown to Iran

To the Parsis who sought shelter in India that country was not unknown. The Maga Brahmans and the Gandhara Brahmans of North India, as well as the Brahmani Magas of the south, who were all of Iranian origin, had come to India in early days but were lost in the big Indian population.* A portion of north-west of India was under Darius, and the Mauryan court was influenced in no small measure by the Iranian court. We have the testimony of Strabo (XV—62) that after the conquest of that portion of India by Iran, for many years the dead there were not buried or cremated but were left to be devoured by vultures, as in Iran. The Ranas of Udaipur, the head of the Sisodia clan of the Rajputs, sprang from the Iranians who came to India towards the close of the sixth century.^{8†} The Pallavas (Parthians, Sanskrit Pahlavas), foreign rulers from the north (*i.e.*, Iran), established their rule in South India somewhere about 150 B.C., but were later on merged in the local population as the Iranians prior to them had been.⁹ Khushru the Great (Noshirwan) and his grandson Khushru II (Parviz) united Iran with India by treaties and commerce, and Pulikessin II, ruler of Badami, sent an embassy to Khushru II in 625, and a return embassy to Pulikessin's court is the subject of a beautiful fresco in cave No. 1 at Ajanta. Coins found in Malwa and in Saurashtra and near Baroda recently go to prove that Iran of the Sassanian days had its colonies in those parts of India.¹⁰

The history of the Parsis after their coming to India in the seventh century can be broadly divided into three periods — the first 700 years (700-1400) of steady progress, then a century of depression (1400-1500), and then again more than 400 years of progress and prosperity (1500-1971).

First permanent settlement at Sanjan

The Parsis began coming to India for settlement from about 636 when conditions in Iran were becoming grave during the days of Yazdezdard III, the last Sassanian king.

* EDITOR'S NOTE · Varahamihira, the great Indian astronomer and astrologer, claimed to be a Maga Brahman. The second part of his name—"mihira"—is certainly Iranian.

† EDITOR'S NOTE The Ranas of Udaipur are one of the contributory lines that led to Shivaji through his father Shahji. His mother, Jijabai, was the daughter of Jadhavrao who claimed descent from the Rajputs of Mewar whose capital then was Chitore. According to Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan*, the Ranas of Chitore trace their origin on one side to the Ghelot Kings of Mewar and on the other to the Sassanian dynasty of Iran. Thus Shivaji, by both his paternal and his maternal lines, had Parsi blood in his veins.

They came at different places and at different periods, and had their first permanent settlement at Sanjan, about a hundred miles north of Bombay, in 716, Cambay and Variav being also, according to some traditions, other settlements of the Parsis in India at about this period. The Hindu King Jadi Rana (Vijayaditya — Jayaditya — Jadi) of Badami allowed them to settle on the west coast of India, with headquarters at Sanjan, on paying a tax. One of the batches of Parsis from Iran which came to Sanjan in 785 had met with a storm while on sea and the refugees took a vow to build a big fire-temple if they landed safely. Accordingly the Parsis built a big fire-temple at Sanjan in 790 for the fire which they had brought from Iran with them.

Causes of their Prosperity

At Sanjan and other places, the Parsis fared well and began making steady progress in a foreign land. This continued for about 700 years, although they suffered at Cambay and Variav on account of their unwise acts. They moved north to Navsari, Broach and Cambay, and to Thana and Cheul in the south. Due to their adaptability, hard work, honesty, industry, charity, enterprise and courage they made their mark wherever they lived.¹¹ Although the community did experience a rapid rise after the British came to India, it is not correct to say that its members lagged behind during the pre-British days. On the contrary, due to their good qualities mentioned above "they were a power in Sanjan."¹² In Cambay they were "one of the chief classes of traders",¹³ and in Surat the Parsi merchants lived in grand style.

The Sacred Fire

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Mahomedan king of Ahmedabad wanted to capture Bassein, near Bombay, and had, therefore, to pass through Sanjan which he attacked. At the request of the Hindu Raja of Sanjan, the Parsis went to his help, but were nearly wiped off, and they had to leave Sanjan and hide themselves in the adjoining mountain of Barot for twelve long years with their sacred fire to avoid persecution by the Mahomedans for a second time in history. The fire was subsequently removed to Bansda, to Navsari and finally to Udvada in 1742 where it still burns, thus making Udvada the Mecca of the Parsis today.

Navsari

After Sanjan, Navsari became the headquarters of the Parsis in India. Dastur Meherji Rana of Navsari was summoned by King Akbar in 1578 to Delhi to explain to him the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion in connection with his eclectic faith of Din-e-Ilahi. Meherji Rana was followed by a few more Parsis to the Moghal court for other reasons and Parsi prestige was thereby enhanced.

Surat

After the conquest of Surat by Akbar in 1573 it became a leading city of the country and remained so for about a century. The Parsis took advantage of the opportunities offered by that city. After Sanjan and Navsari, Surat now became the headquarters of the Parsis for nearly two hundred years, and they enjoyed great prosperity there, the leading Parsi of that city being Rustam Maneck. Rustam Maneck was the chief broker of the English East India Company and nearly Rs. five lacs were due to him by the Company which its officers in India did not want to pay. After Rustam's death, his youngest son Navroji took up the matter and went to England in 1723 to plead his case before the Directors of the Company and he succeeded in getting the money due. He was the first Parsi and the first Indian of note, for that matter, to go to England from India. All the European trading companies had their factories in Surat, like the English, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese, and all of them had Parsis as their chief brokers.

Bombay

When the English shifted their factory from Surat to Bombay in 1668 the Parsis followed them there but Surat remained their headquarters for nearly two centuries. But the 1790 famine in Gujarat and the big fire in Surat in 1837 compelled the Parsis to make Bombay their next headquarters. Nearly 70% of the Parsis of India live in that city today.

The rapid rise of the Parsis after coming to Bombay was chiefly due to their association with the Europeans, notably the English. The Hindus kept aloof on account of their orthodox customs and the Mahomedans did not co-operate with them as they regarded them as their business competitors and later on as their political rivals too. Besides, the Parsis were very useful to the Europeans as middle-men for their trading operations and also for their dealings with the local population and the Moghal and Maratha governments. They now began to cross the seas as well and go to China and other places and their commercial career on a bigger scale was founded. When in 1692 the Sidis of Janjira attacked Bombay to drive away the British from Western India, a Parsi, Rustamji Dorabji, defended it with the help of a small militia raised from among the fishermen of the island. This reminds us of the Parsi Rustamji of South Africa saving the life of Mahatma Gandhi in 1897.

Some notable figures of this period

The notable Parsis of this period were the ship-builder Lavji Wadia, Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy whose name became a household word for catholic charities, Sir Dinshaw Petit who was the pioneer in the cotton spinning and weaving industry in Bombay

which turned that city into the Manchester of the East, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, a big businessman, and Jamshedji Tata who is regarded as the father of modern Indian industries. As every schoolboy knows, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Dinshaw Wacha rendered yeoman service to the cause of India's freedom from British rule.

Present position

After the decline of the Hindu period in India in the eighth century and with the advent of the Muslims there was a fall in the general education of the masses although the Muslim rulers did keep the lamp of learning burning in their courts. This continued for about a thousand years till the second half of the last century when the British introduced in the country education on western lines for all their subjects. The Parsis were quick to take advantage of this opportunity; they studied in India as well as abroad, especially in England, and held high positions in Government service, native states and private concerns, and were prominent in the different professions and in business as well. They were in the lead in this respect for about half a century, when the other communities began to compete with them, but still they continue to hold a respectable position in these spheres.

P. P. BALSARA

NOTES

¹ *Persia*, p. 376.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XVII, p. 550.

³ Isaiah, XLIV, 28

⁴ Mohammed Riza Shah Pahlavi, "Mission for My Country".

⁵ *A History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 154

⁶ Prof. Darmesteter, *Persia and Parsus*, Part I, ed. G. K. Nariman, p. 4.

⁷ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III, p. 499, P. M. Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia or Eight Years in Iran*, p. 51.

⁸ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 194 n.; Col. J. Tod, *Annals of Rajasthan*; Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*; V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 172, M. A. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. I, pp. XXI-II.

⁹ S. K. Hodivala, *Parsis of Ancient India*, pp. 23, 50, H. M. Elliott, *The History of India*, Vol. VIII, p. 258

¹⁰ "Parasikas", article in *M. P. Kharegat Memorial Volume*, pp. 199, 200.

¹¹ Idrisi, the well-known Arab traveller who was in Sanjan in 1153, speaks of the industry, intelligence, courage and wealth of the Sanjan Parsis of those days.

¹² S. M. Edwardes, *The Rise of Bombay*, p. 21

¹³ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IX, pp. 292, 293.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Songs of Youth: In Bengali, with an English translation, by Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, Director of Physical Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Songs are known to have infused new life into nations, they have even changed the course of history. Somebody sang the *Bandemataram*, and Bengal awoke from her long slumber; the songs of Tagore incited revolution. The marching song of five hundred “patriots” from Marseilles overthrew an age-old monarchy and set half of the civilised world in flames.

One may hazard a guess that this little book of twenty-one songs by one who can truly claim what he says in one of these songs, “I speak in simple and straightforward words, I speak out what I think is right”, — one can almost make a prophecy that these songs will help raise our people. What he has done in them is what Sri Aurobindo has prescribed: “For poetic effect rely wholly on the power of your substance, the magic of rhythm and the sincerity of your expression — if you can add subtlety so much the better, but not at the cost of sincerity and straightforwardness.... Write always from the inner heart of emotion and vision.” Still more, what the author has tried to do is to give the rising generation a sense of mission, an ideal to live and strive for.

Tagore, in one of his inspired moments, had called upon youth to shake the half-dead into life, *Ore sabuj, ore āmar kānchā, ādhmarāder ghā diye tui bānchā*. Youth did not respond, has itself been rushing towards death, does not even realise what it is looking for. Here, in these poems it will find what it wants. If it has the courage and the persistence it may some day shake the half-dead into life.

This is what youth is blindly seeking: “We shall live the way that is worth the toil and...laugh and laugh with a simple heart.... Wisdom’s torch we shall light.... Tear asunder the web of desire, the fence of ego we shall break through.... We shall do good by all men, bind all in bonds of love.... Towards the unknown our race shall be.... Amidst hurdles and dangers, storms and stumbles we shall carry on our battle.... We shall never let go in vain the self-sacrifice of martyrs of the past, we shall see our beloved Motherland raised again to golden pinnacles of glory....” This is the meaning of all the “revolt” of modern youth. “Without understanding you call him a rebel, a rebel he is not; to help the world’s march has he taken birth. Victory to youth.”

But it is not easy always to keep the flame alive. “The lure of an easy life, the ties of home pull one back. Pride and tempting desires, vanity and sense of hurt need courage to push aside.... One needs to forget what is left behind in order to move ahead.” What then is the secret? Joy is the secret. “Sing out free in heart, and sing

the song of joy. Song-enraptured you'll cast the past that ties, and voyage along...." Work is the secret. "In work alone, in unison, our effort shall see the promised dawn." Humility is the secret. "The Name that fills the whole being with joy, O King of yogis, I bow down to Thee.... The Mother of love and compassion, the saviour of humanity, I bow down to Thee."

But there is a supremest secret of all, that is not so commonly seen. "This I whisper into your ears. Him alone do I call a 'good man', who can give without asking anything in return." Love is the secret. To find one who truly loves needs a long wait. "To find such a one I am always on the watch."

India possesses this supreme secret of love. "O my beloved land of India, to tune the many into one harmony, to keep at a distance all thoughts of self, this is what you have taught me, Victory to you, victory evermore." Bengal will achieve the miracle. Through its unity, "India will be saved, the world will be saved...."

A magnificent piece of work, by one who has inspired the youth of the Ashram and who is bound to inspire the youth of Bengal and of India.

SANAT K. BANERJI

Pindar: by Gilbert Norwood, University of California, 1945, 1956, Sather Classical Lectures, Vol. 19.

A valuable book, for anyone who values poetry. Professor Norwood, with a high competence, presents Pindar to us from every aspect in which it is still possible, and affirms that the main thing about him is not any particular thing or things he says, or even his whole "world view", in so far as we can see it—but just his sheer and pure poetical genius, his masterful song that bears and gives its "triumphant illumination".

The hasty observer may find "illumination" a strange term to apply to Pindar. For he is one of the obscurest of poets, and it is seldom that one can be certain just what his "meaning" is. He was not easy for his contemporaries either, and did not mean to be: he gloried in a mighty resounding utterance, the terms of which were beyond mere humanity. There is no poet who has more eloquently and surely affirmed poetry as something less human than divine. It is here, in this elevated, bursting clarity, that one finds his light and his value, if at all.

It is only a modest proportion of his large output that we have; and that, except for fragments, is confined to Victory Odes—only one of the several kinds of poetry he cultivated. To the Greeks these may have been the crown of his work and the summit of his divine gift; but to a modern reader they are an additional stumbling-block. For probably no one nowadays can reproduce perfectly in himself, even for a short time, the Greek spirit: and it is perhaps just in athletics that that spirit is most foreign to all non-Greeks whatever. However we may enjoy sports and games, or respect them for whatever reason, it is not easy to understand the particular Greek approach—to share the *religious* exaltation—the vision and feeling that a victory in a chariot race was a *holy* thing, and that it hallowed not only the victor but his whole city, forever afterwards. A poet who is primarily for us a singer of such victories is sure to

be “caviare to the general”, and even to baffle the best will of most who would appreciate him.

And yet there is little in these Odes of Pindar that refers directly to the Games at all. They are primarily *religious* celebrations, and affirmations of the divine character of poetry itself. Here their power is very great, and comes through even in translation. This may indeed be considered one of the tests of a supreme poet: that he *does* come through in translation. Certainly Homer and Dante do, and Vyasa and Valmiki; it is said that Shakespeare does; and I have no doubt that Sri Aurobindo does also; and Pindar is one of this company.

He was certainly aware of his transcendent poetic genius; and being Greek, he proclaimed it, in the most positive terms. He gives himself to the world uncompromisingly, as a supremely skilful instrument of divine inspiration and nothing else. He is not crystalline; he does not give us only a prosy kind of “French clarity”; he is dark, it may be said, with the splendour of his illumination—with his deep flashes of Light from beyond any human sphere. He is a voice of the Mystery of divine creation. He is himself a Victor, and triumphantly wields the Word that hallows and makes sacred, and lifts, not without difficulty, to a more than earthly nobility and blessing. His is the poetry of the superiority, the power, above all the beauty given by the gods to the favored of mankind: that gender that is indeed akin to the gods, and can rise to their company. And here we may find another test of the supreme poet: that he is *triumphant*, that he sings with an elevated and a radiant surety. He is not a grubbing and problem-beset “ironist”, hobbled and small, blinkered and tethered to his very own unilluminated and uninspired incapacity; he is the sovereign rider of the winged horse, who opens the spring on the mountain summit and whose true home is Heaven. He is the eagle, who flies towards the sun; the twittering sparrows, the blatant and raucous crows, the petty magpies and all the lesser birds he leaves quite behind, and soars on a wing that is not to be fettered or dampened by the gravity or the airs of mortality. It is the deathless divine Beauty that he celebrates, nothing lesser: he is pre-eminently the poet of the Aigla, the Radiance of existence—Theia, the mother of the Sun and the countless illuminations; he sings the enhancement and further exaltation of the Vibhuti, the divine Splendor in all things.

JESSE ROARKE

Divya-Jivan: Hindi Translation of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, by Keshava Deva Acharya. Published by Divya-Jivan Sahitya Prakashan, Pondicherry 2. Price: Rs. 20.

In line with the Rishis of the past it was given to the “last of the Rishis” in the present to say the last word on spiritual philosophy—the philosophy of ‘evolution’ which synthesises, harmonises and consummates all in a global vision of ‘perfect perfection’ for man and this world, and which is reasoned out through a massive structure of thought, *The Life Divine*. The assimilation of this vast treasure would enrich and edify the deepest thought-content of any language; only it is extremely

difficult; it imposes exacting conditions for anything like an authentic version of the original. Acharya Keshava Deva is, however, singularly equipped by temperament and training to achieve it—almost cut out for the feat, as few translators can be.

Firstly, in giving him permission to translate the book way back in 1942, Sri Aurobindo—and afterwards the Mother while blessing the assignment—will have already seen in him a promise, a fitness for the task. Secondly, his meditative bent and preoccupation with philosophy—Eastern and Western—and later his sole absorption in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as the final refuge of his questing mind and, thirdly, his attempt at living out the philosophy of Life Divine by the practise of Integral Yoga for about 30 years now as an Ashramite when he tackled and chewed and digested every word and thought that offered difficulty — these formed his hardest preparation. Fourthly, erudite scholar of Sanskrit that he is, synonyms and equivalents from traditional philosophies matching the terms used in *The Life Divine* were at his command and make familiar reading of his text. Where the Indian source failed him he has coined words from the Sanskrit root; of course, drawing here and there on the English-Hindi Terminology published by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. Lastly, prompted by the patriotic impulse to transmit through the most widespread of the national languages the treasures of his devotion to the largest section of the reading public, he has contributed about a dozen books on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga, and a compiled translation of his *Essays on the Gita*. But all this was a prelude to his crowning contribution, the translation of *The Life Divine*, which, on the strength of its merit, was serially published first by the Ashram Quarterly, *Aditi*.

Sensitive to the nuances of style, the Acharya has judiciously avoided loading his version with the corresponding long periodic sentences of the Master and split them into short ones. He has also relegated to the footnote or the appendix words and concepts which needed elaboration for their clarity but which would be otherwise a drag on the flow of the language. It is a chaste, fluent, lucid and felicitous Hindi that he wields, and his work reads like an original classic of a consummate writer.

Apart from the two appendices, one being a very helpful list of relevant Hindi-English equivalents, the book has an informative introduction which spells out the superiority of the Master's philosophy over all others that are judged and found wanting. It also throws light on the method and style of the translation.

Altogether this Hindi version of Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus* is a masterpiece, likely to be the best of its kind, and as such the philosophical literature of Hindi would indeed cherish it as a monumental asset. It will be in the fitness of things if it is recognised as a textbook for the postgraduate departments of Hindi and Philosophy in our Universities that are fast replacing English as the medium of higher studies too. Research scholars would no doubt find in it ample material for their doctorate degrees.

Shree Aravindayan: By *Panditrao Raval*: Publisher—Rambhai Nathabhai Amin, Ram Home, Gulabbhai's Tekra, Behind New Patel Society, Ahmedabad-6. Price: Rs. 4/—

This book, published on the eve of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary, is a very welcome present to all lovers of the Master. It is written in easy Gujarati and in such a straightforward narrative style that people of all ages and not only young students will be able to enjoy the lifestory of Sri Aurobindo and absorb its subtle influence and feel inspired to be at one with the hero of the work—the hero who was destined to attain not only to dizzy heights of our earthly existence but to those of worlds as yet unexplored by the generality of mankind and to that highest and widest and deepest Reality which men worship under the general name of 'God'.

This simple book deals with the complex and multifold life-history of Sri Aurobindo, the fiery patriot, the eloquent exponent of true Indian nationalism, the poet of poets, the great expounder of spiritual philosophy, the master Yogin, the integral Siddha, and the Godhead manifested in a human mould, to be eternally adored and followed by the aspiring soul of man.

The author has taken great pains to gather a large number of facts about Sri Aurobindo and possibly he will add still more in the second edition. It is well-known that in the beginning there were a number of beautiful cats kept in the Ashram. It would therefore be interesting and enlightening to know why they were kept and how they were treated. Sri Aurobindo himself has written the poem *Despair on the Staircase* on one of them.

It will not be a surprise if various other languages of India and the world hasten to translate this Gujarati work and thus serve the need of their young with the Light that Sri Aurobindo is, and awaken enthusiasm for living the life divine of the Master.

PUNJALAL

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of October, 1971)

YOGA AND THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

The Problem of Money

WE must pause here to answer an oft-repeated question—“Why among the devotees do some rise to eminence while the prayers of others are like a cry in the wilderness?”

Spiritual geniuses put forth the argument that the Divine is equal to all. He does not choose one and reject another. We have on record the words of Sri Aurobindo, “We are equal to all, rich and poor.”

There is a constant flow of the Grace. All depends upon one’s past evolution and the intensity of the soul’s aspiration. If a closed vessel is kept beneath a running tap, can anything enter in? How can the Divine be blamed if such is our case?

Do all the students who appear for an examination pass with distinction? No, the examiner is impartial to all. He gives marks on the merits of the papers.

Part of the solution lies in the fact that “The Divine never refuses to grant our prayer” but while we pray, “Let Thy will be done,” we cherish a desire within ourselves, “Let my will be done.” Hence there arises a contradiction. The Divine does what is the best for us.

X sent for an eminent doctor for the treatment of her ailing son. No sooner had the doctor’s eyes fallen on the photo of the Mother than he began to use abusive words. X did not lose her temper. She reflected for a moment and then said in a calm and dignified tone, “Well, you are a doctor. Do all the patients who come to you get cured? Some do, some do not. If you cannot derive any solace from the blissful Mother, why should you think others can’t? I do not want my son to be treated by you. Please leave me alone.”

Can such loyalty be in vain?

If one enters into a higher stage and is able to remain concentrated in working hours, “the work,” says the Mother, “that would require one hour can be done in fifteen minutes.” If one learns to keep the heart in God and the hand in work, it may lead to the opening of new visions, new perceptions, an aid to quick and flawless business decisions. This will bring the joy of living, the joy of work, the joy of earning, lightening the burden of life. Thus Yoga is something immensely practical even for men of action.

D drawing upon his experience of business life, where he had made a mark,

spoke to a bright youth, "If you want success in business, you must be full of business, think always of business, plan business, dream business, be business-minded all the time. It is not a joke to earn money with honest means these days when falsehood reigns supreme."

Those inclined to tread the path of Yoga, without discarding the calls of life, must be prepared to do the reverse. The secret of success in life lies not in bothering all the time about business but in bringing in the higher force to act; in other words, in getting the work done by God "instead of doing all by the mind's efforts," as Sri Aurobindo puts it. This is the Gita's skill in works.

Whatever be the nature of work, it must be leavened by the spiritual yeast. Then a time will come when one can see life is not a lone battle, there is somebody, not far away but behind, to hold high the flag.

There are people here even of the higher level of society whose hearts are full of the Mother. Whatever be the topic, strains of devotion sweeten the talk. While going to the Ashram I met Y and greeted him with the words:

"Feeling happy?"

"Always happy. Had I been away from the Ashram there would have been no end of mental worries and botheration. You cannot avoid the assault of unruly thoughts outside.

"Here the case is different. When life's storms gather, clouds of difficulties thunder, stand before the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo; you become calm and some solution is found.

"Not myself alone but the whole family has now turned to the Mother. Hence there is no dissenting voice. If I go in one direction and any of them in a different one, then things become difficult." He went on.

"Outside, a little work produces a lot of excitement and worries, turning the head hot. In the field of business one cannot avoid mental poison.

"Here we are not afflicted by worries. One has the feeling, somebody is there to look after our affairs."

The inner journey cannot come to an end here. One must reach the stage when there is no problem, no worry, no misery, no trace of inner turmoil. One never fears failure, but has the inner strength to laugh at loss—to take loss and gain as a mere play, a game of life-forces. This would prepare the ground for spiritual living.

Here I may speak of a person who had only one touch of the Master which wrought a change in his outlook on life. When he stood before the Master in 1950 he felt something coming out of Sri Aurobindo and entering him. That was his first and last Darshan. As his inner relation with the Mother deepened there developed in him the capacity to feel the pulse of the market and he did not fail to hit the target at the right moment. He earned a lot and spent a lot in a way that enriched his soul. That is why he gladly acknowledged he never felt a pinch in giving. The house that he bought towards the end of his life, he had registered in the name of the Ashram and not of his children. He held the view, "All my children belong to the Mother." Such detach-

ment is the first sign of freedom from bondage, the slavery to money. And while living a rich business-life he acquired what is hard to gain even by a lot of Japa, Dhyana, Asana, and Pranayama

Z can be described as an image of dedicated life. After long years of fight with baffling problems of life he minted money; but money coming and going left him untouched, with no mark on him. He let himself be robbed time and again to meet the need of others. He did not mind even being cheated. The joy of giving was always on his face.

Since the time he joined the Ashram, he has been entrusted with a work which keeps him beset with problems but a faith sustains him that all problems are Hers' and She will set them right in time. A unification has been achieved of the head, heart and hand—all in the service of the Mother. But real living is dying for the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo came to teach the world to walk the earth like gods. It should be clear from the above that his Yoga is not against our having health, wealth, happiness and prosperity. Only all must be used to manifest His splendour, His glory on earth.

In adopting the line of Yoga in life, we stand to lose nothing but the deceptive pleasures—the false lure of enjoyment. An old adage enjoins:—*vīr bhogyā vasundharā* —“Be strong and then enjoy.” Only the strong have the right to enjoy the riches of the earth.

It is the gods who know how to enjoy life in its fulness. For they have no problems. They are not slaves of passion like us. They are masters of themselves, and free like the air. It is the Divine Will that finds a free play in their life and action.

The devils have usurped the seat of God. God has to be enthroned there—He has to be enthroned not only in our individual life but in the collectivity. It is this that can rebuild mankind and herald a new era.

Let work and worship go together. Treat all life as Yoga. Let all you do be an offering¹ to the Divine. This is the Sadhana that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have brought for the age. The world is sick. Life is pain. Here is a message mild, simple, comforting, full of high promise.

World Problems

The modern world is not void of money and means, it was never so rich² as to-day but there is no end of man's problems. Before one crisis is resolved a hundred

¹ On the occasion of the inauguration ceremony of the Aurofood at Auroville, the Mother gave the message:

“Let the whole work be done as an offering to the Divine.”

² Last year (1970) alone some \$ 204,000 or over Rs 15,000,000 were spent on armament, that is to say, the equivalent of a total year's income of all developing countries, so said U. Thant, the Secretary-General of U.N.O.

crop up and tension goes on mounting. Is this not poverty in the midst of plenty?

This can be reckoned as a symptom not the cause of world disease. It is the cause that has to be sought out and treated.

By close study one can discover that the destiny of a nation is written not by leaders of men like Hitler or Stalin but the hidden forces that use them as puppets. Unless the forces are subdued, world problems cannot be solved.

Herein lies the importance of Sri Aurobindo's life-long Yogic research. He has gone to the root of the problem and said that unless the forces of the lower regions are conquered in their own domain "peace is forbidden on earth".

"Civilisations are based on cultures which lead to the establishment of an ordered pattern of life. They last for variable periods, are then destroyed and then replaced at a later date by some new form of culture."

In his Yogic vision Sri Aurobindo saw that the time has come for such a change. The time for mental and industrial civilisation is over. Now the question that stands uppermost is whether man will increase his immense capabilities, proceed onward or will be in the end swept aside by Nature as an experiment which has failed.

Who in the world can give a suitable answer?

Sri Aurobindo holds that the present upheaval in the world is the birth-pangs of the earth. Not only life is evolving, the universe itself is evolving. Man, as he is, cannot be the last product of evolutionary Nature. A new type of man, a new race is not only possible but inevitable.

Evolution confirms that despite tremendous odds and ordeals man is on the march; It is his destiny to rise to the status of the gods.

The main hindrance to bringing in the transformation of life is that man refuses to accept a change in his ways of life, his ways of thinking and acting.

To mould man's mind there must be a reorientation of values. Without that, no true and lasting order in life is possible. There must be a reorientation of thought and action. Until we get rid of the animalistic tendencies and propensities life cannot breathe a fresh and divine air. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga calls for this radical change, change of not only thought and attitude but change of consciousness, change in character. The beauty of character should find expression in action.

The Mother points out in her lucid manner: "All the divine powers are manifested here and are deformed here—light, life, love, power, harmony, Ananda, all; there is nothing that is not divine in its origin...."

Can a diamond fallen in mud shed lustre? Let the mud—the coating of falsehood—be removed and life will be restored to its glorious status. This is transformation.

The one word "transformation" contains in seed-form the whole philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

"Transformation means that the higher consciousness is brought down into the mind, vital and body and takes the place of the lower."

The descending force must be felt in all the limbs of the being; then Yoga will

prove to be a magic key. The Truth of Sri Aurobindo's saying is open to experiment by all—men and women, of all walks of life, of all religions and all lands.

The whole endeavour of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is to set a concrete example of how the Divine can be installed in the daily round of life. It is nothing short of a revolution of life. An inner revolution is much more exacting than an outer, especially when it is based on evolution.

It is not a new religion that Sri Aurobindo has brought but a new hope, a new path, a new philosophy of life to solve human problems.

(To be continued)

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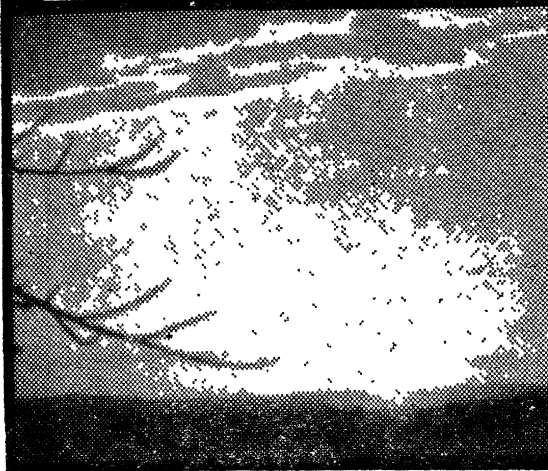
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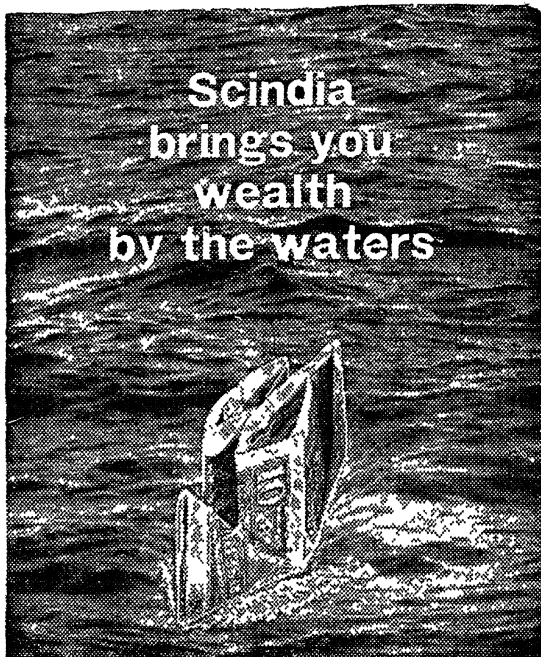


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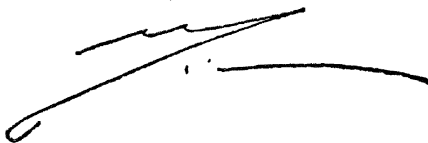
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